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New Statesman

PRIVATE ARMIES ON THE MOVE

EXCLUSIVE

Duncan Campbell

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New Statesman

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New Statesman Vol 107 No 2760 10 February 1984

Predicted disaster in Lebanon

AMERICAN FOREIGN policy is in a terrifying condition. It appears to be in the control of people who learn nothing and forget nothing. Its sudden lurches are deeply and dangerously confusing to friend and foe alike.

The Lebanon has ended in a predictable disaster for President Reagan. A week ago he was saying that the US could not cut and run, because American prestige and credibility were at stake. The British, French and Italian contingents were accordingly kept in Beirut a while longer to provide a tiny international fig-leaf for an exercise of American imperialism that was manifestly going wrong. A week later US marines are being pulled out fast.

The face saving pretence that they are only being withdrawn to the greater security of US warships offshore will fool no one. You cannot keep thousands of soldiers indefinitely crowded into ships at sea – if only for the banal reason that they get sea-sick and unhappy. In any case, what purpose do they serve floating about in the Eastern Mediterranean, presenting a target to a suicide attacker? If they were landed again in the Lebanon, it would be a clear act of war by the United States. There could be no claim this time that they were there as a peace-keeping force. It is inconceivable that even the Reagan Administration would take such a step in an election year. Having the marines in ships offshore is a symbolic statement of the impotence of US policy in the Lebanon. The odd air strike or heavy naval bombardment may make the Americans feel more muscular. But no one now thinks that they have any effect on the next phase of politics in a country that has disintegrated into a civil war between its myriad factions.

The lessons that ought to be drawn are clear enough. The Americans should understand that places with complex political and social problems like the Lebanon are not helped if those problems are analysed and treated exclusively in terms of great-power vacuums and of an ideological struggle between communism and the United States. The Lebanese will now work out for themselves some way of living and some closer relationship with Syria. They could have done so over the past two years, if the US had not actively connived at the Israeli government's disastrous attempt to turn the Lebanon into an Israeli protectorate by force of arms.

But that is not the lesson that the Reagan Administration will learn. US prestige having been laid on the line and lost in the Levant, it will want to 'restore' it elsewhere. The invasion of Grenada last year allowed the President to 'walk tall' after the 241 US marines were killed in Beirut. The danger now is that he will come under pressure from his more gung-ho advisers to authorise some other show of force against a soft target to restore American 'credibility'.

Our Washington correspondent has already suggested that some synthetic second Cuba crisis might be arranged. Further action against Nicaragua remains a possibility. The only cause for optimism is that the motives behind any such move would be so transparently obvious. □

Sanjay Thatcher and Sir Geoffrey Who

MRS THATCHER has developed a strong streak of arrogance. For the last two weeks she has been paying for it politically. She took a while back to using the royal 'we', instead of 'I'. But the landslide election victory last June seems to have sent her right over the top. She also seems to be feeling the effect of the phenomenon – often experienced by Prime Ministers after several years cocooned in office – of losing touch with how people think and react in the outside world.

The GCHQ affair has been bungled from the start. (Sir Geoffrey Howe hasn't suddenly become a bumbling and incompetent Foreign Secretary. His performances as Chancellor were exactly the same, but because his brief then was economics and finance, very few people noticed.) It is not true that the government's hands were tied until the Prime case last year because the activity of GCHQ was still top secret. The nature of GCHQ's work was made public on 14 November, 1977 – when 'Colonel B' in the notorious ABC secrets trial gave evidence for the first time about 'sigint'. It is also not true that interruptions in GCHQ's coverage affected national security. What they did affect was the relationship with the prime customer for GCHQ's product – namely the United States.

In any case, as is now almost universally conceded, working arrangements to ensure continuous monitoring at GCHQ are not the same thing as a unilateral attempt to remove a citizen's right to belong to a union. Only someone who arrogantly declined to listen to advice could make such a mistake. If she does not back down, the issue should be tested all the way to the European Court – which unhappily is now the only way to protect rights that in other countries are part of the constitution. And, if House of Commons select committees are to protect *their* credibility, the Prime Minister's personal order to two GCHQ employees not to give evidence to them must, also be challenged. If the House of Commons does not stick up for Parliament's rights in a parliamentary democracy, who else will?

Her arrogance has also conditioned her handling of the Mark affair. Once the *Observer* revealed last Sunday that there was no Omani contract to be supported at the time of her visit, but that she introduced her son and the company Cementation with which he was associated, then her argument that she was just 'batting for Britain' is not enough. Combined with the fact that this was an act of personal initiative on her part, since the Department of Trade knew nothing of it and had not briefed her, the suspicion that she was touting for business specifically for Cementation (and specifically because her son asked her to) becomes very strong.

At the very least a situation has been created in which any previous Prime Minister would have felt obliged to make a personal statement and explanation. She seems to think that such conventions do not apply to her. It's an unpleasantly arrogant attitude. □

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Private 'military-style force' gets government backing

A LITTLE-KNOWN 'military-style force' has been given government backing to expand and 'legalise' its activities, according to government circulars obtained by the *New Statesman*. Over the last three years, the London-based paramilitary group – the 'Legion of Frontiersmen of the Commonwealth' has, according to its Commandant, become a registered charity at the suggestion of Defence Ministry officials.

Last month the Home Office incorporated the Legion's paramilitaries into its civil defence volunteer programme and announced that the Legion was officially regarded as 'committed to the support of . . . war emergency plans'.

Labour MPs this week expressed surprise that a military organisation whose objects include assistance to the Army in 'war' should have been registered by the Charity Commissioners. Ayrshire MP George Foulkes is questioning the Home Secretary about the Commissioners' decision. Another MP, Denis Canavan, last week asked the Charity Commissioners to justify the registration of four politically right-wing institutions as charities. He will be adding the Legion to his enquiry list. Charities are generally supposed not to be 'political'.

'Peace', paradoxically, is not officially recognised as a charitable activity. Two weeks ago, GLC officials consulted the Charity Commissioners about the Council's plans for a Peace Prize and were warned that 'the promotion of peace as such is not a charitable purpose', according to the law.

Frank Field MP will also be questioning the Secretary of State for Defence and the Attorney General this week about the Legion's claim that the government has authorised the raising of private paramilitary organisations – despite the provisions of the 1936 Public Order Act, which prohibit the wearing of uniforms for political purposes and the formation of quasi-military organisations.

The Legion asserts that it is, in effect, licensed by the Ministry of Defence to operate as an unofficial military force. In a recent letter to an enquirer, the Legion's Scottish Commander, Major T.C.R. Armstrong-Wilson of Dumfries, wrote:

> The Legion . . . is a Military (or, rather, Cavalry) style force very similar to the TA, but it is not part of the Ministry of Defence. It is, however, approved by the MoD otherwise it could not exist.

The Legion of Frontiersmen's current Commandant is 'Brigadier' Peter Fitchett, a physiotherapist whose private clinic at Heath House, Bexleyheath, also serves as the national headquarters of the Legion and the drilling and meeting centre for its London area 'Colour Squadron'. He told the *New Statesman* last week that the Legion now had over 2,000 members. With government backing, the Legion has recently embarked on an 'expansion programme'.

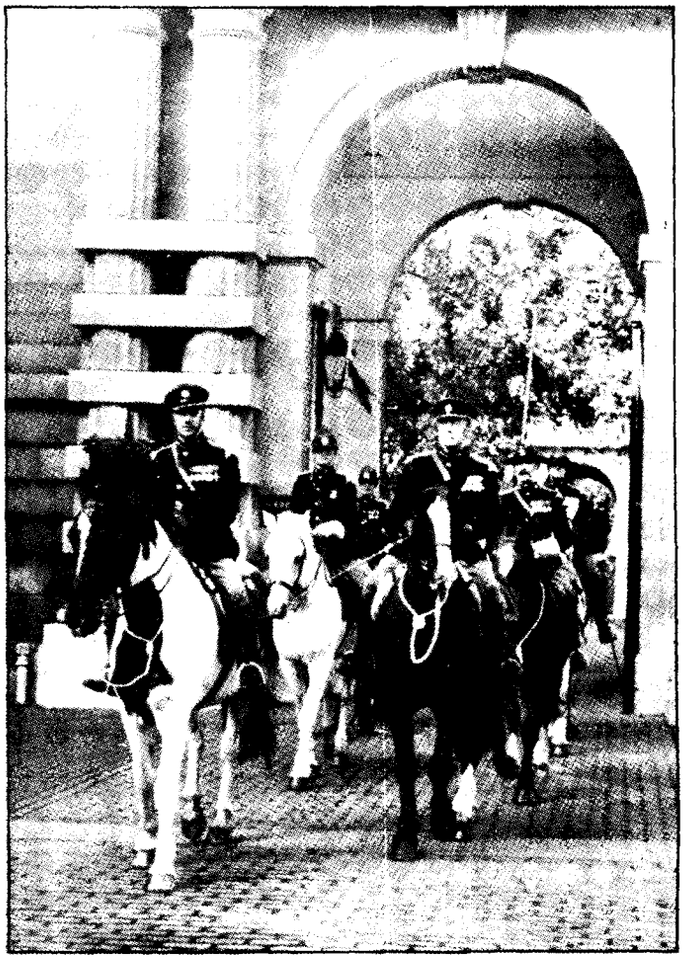
The Legion has established a complete military structure throughout Britain, with Squadron headquarters in Scotland, Sussex, Northamptonshire and Greater London. All of its officer cadre use military titles ranging from Lieutenant to Brigadier.

The Ministry of Defence advised the Legion to become a charity. According to Brigadier Fitchett: 'We decided through (advice from the) MoD to legalise ourselves – it's taken three years'. The Legion, although independent, is a member of the government-funded Reserve Forces Association (RFA), which embraces over 200 territorial army-type units. 'We used to use a lot of Territorial Army drill halls and training areas', Fitchett said.

Ministry of Defence officials, however, this week disputed the Legion's claim to have their official backing. 'The Legion', according to a Ministry statement on Tuesday, 'is not officially recognised by MoD. It is not allowed to use our drill halls. We are uncertain of its charitable status, but we have not sponsored it as a charity'.

The MoD says that it does pay about £10,000 a year towards the administrative costs of the RFA.

Some of this money is believed to have been used until 1977 by a secret 'Resistance and Psychological Operations Committee' of the RFA. The Committee was planning an undercover 'anti-communist resistance' network in case of war or emergency in Britain. Defence Ministry officials this week admitted that the 'resistance' committee operated in this conspiratorial way until early in 1976 when the government advised the Association to disband the secret operation. At the time, members of the Resistance and Psychological Operations Committee had, according to the *Daily Express*, been setting up their own secret national paramilitary and intelligence network.



The Legion of Frontiersmen: the Colour Party and Commonwealth Staff Officers

The Legion of Frontiersmen has no connection with fascist organisations, and members fought against the Nazis in Belgium even before the British declaration of war in 1939. Individual members of the National Front and similiar extreme right-wing bodies are, however, known to have penetrated the Legion in the past in the north of England.

According to Legion literature, its training includes plans for 'aid to the civil power'. The Legion's history says that it 'assisted in quelling the troubles in Rhodesia' in the 1950s and that its members fought in both World Wars and several African wars. Formed in 1904, the Legion claims to have had 25 squadrons and 17,000 members during the first world war.

The MPs' questions reflect fears that the 1936 Public Order Act, which was passed to prevent Mosley's blackshirts from training and operating as a military force, may not contain sufficient powers to deal effectively with paramilitary organisations. According to LSE law professor John Griffith, 'The meaning of Section 2 of the Public Order Act (prohibiting quasi-military organisations) is by no means clear in relation to organisations of this kind. There is a wide loophole in the Act because of its lack of clarity about political objects . . . it could let in all sorts of organisations.'

Professor Griffith commented that, although the Legion declares itself to be non-political, this doesn't get it 'off the hook' of the law 'just by saying you're non-political'. Politically-motivated organisations could use the loophole and such claims to set up private armies.

The Legion's activities, which include regular weekly drilling and a members' shooting club, raise the question of whether they are legal under the 1819 Unlawful Drilling Act, which prohibits 'meetings . . . for the purpose of (military) training or drilling . . . without

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lawful authority from Her Majesty or a Secretary of State'. The MoD says that no authority has been given.

Yet the Legion's recruiting literature now claims that it is 'fully integrated into the Home Office Emergency Planning Organisation'. Its objects have recently been changed to stress civil emergency operations. The 'United Kingdom Command' of the Legion is claimed in its trust deed to be a 'non-political' association intending 'to protect and restore life in communities affected by disasters or emergencies' and 'to act in support of and in co-operation with . . . emergency services in times of disaster and emergency'.

Its third, purely military, objective is 'in times of war and national emergency, to aid the armed forces in all possible ways'. The Legion also operates a cadet force for 14-18 year olds intended to 'instruct young persons in the principles of discipline, loyalty and good citizenship'.

The Legion's activities have been highlighted by its being recruited to join the government's civil defence campaign by the Home Office's Co-ordinator of Voluntary Effort in Civil Defence, Sir Leslie Mavor. Mavor, an ex-RAF officer, was formerly head of the Home Defence College in Yorkshire. Since his appointment in 1981, he has been writing a highly personal 'Quarterly Newsletter' which is sent direct to council Emergency Planning Officers, deliberately bypassing councillors and senior officials, particularly in 'nuclear free zone' local authorities. As the Home Office's chief protagonist on behalf of civil defence and nuclear weapons, Mavor writes his Newsletters in a blunt, unrestrained and spirited fashion not normally associated with public civil service documents. Members of Camden Council have, however, obtained recent issues of the Newsletter and passed them to the *NS*.

In his final 1983 Newsletter, No 8 in the series, Mavor invited his readers to find out more about the Legion. He concluded:

> That's it – the last newsletter under the old regime of the flaccid hand in the velvet glove . . . In January, the Civil Defence regulations . . . will be about to burst on a suspecting world.

In the latest Newsletter, issued last month, Mavor wrote that:

> It is up to us to show determination, understanding and skill in dismantling, piece by piece, the last filibustering impediments that are put in the way . . . of the government's civil defence policy.

'For once', he commented, 'the opponents of civil defence inside and outside local government (are) going to find themselves on the defensive.'

Duncan Campbell

Greenham woman arrested in US

A GREENHAM woman on a money-raising tour in the US has been arrested and charged with conspiracy to obstruct, to commit trespass and to disturb the peace. She comes up for trial on 13 March and, if found guilty, faces a sentence of 2½ years in prison.

The woman is Jean Hutchinson who has been raising support and money for the case of Greenham women against President Reagan. (They are claiming that the deployment of cruise missiles is illegal because if used they will kill millions of civilians, which is proscribed under various international laws.) One evening last December Ms Hutchinson spoke to a religious group, Covenant for Peace, at a church in Michigan. In the town, Williams International Corporation is working on its contract to build 5000-7000 cruise missile engines.

During her talk, Ms Hutchinson showed a piece of the Greenham fence which had been torn down – surprising her audience with this evidence of how vulnerable 'their' defences were in Britain. She quoted from the 19th century American philosopher and war resister Henry Thoreau and generally offered what Sheriff's Deputies later described as encouragement. This is illegal under a court injunction prohibiting blocking the entrance to the Williams factory as well as 'encouraging, inducing, inciting and pressuring others' to do so.

At least four plainclothes police were at the meeting. The next night uniformed police arrived at the church with a search warrant, looking for the Greenham film 'Common Sense', and confiscated files containing the names of participants in the Williams blockade.

When Hutchinson appeared at the Covenant's demonstration outside Williams' factory on 2 December as an observer, she was arrested along with 51 Americans. She was held for 24 hours and arraigned 'in a dirty back room office instead of a proper court', she says.

She has been charged with obstruction before, at Greenham and in New York, but not conspiracy. 'I'm very flattered,' she says. 'I was only passing through and hardly had any time to conspire at all.' At the trial on 13 March, Hutchinson will use the American constitutional right of freedom of speech and assembly in her defence.

Susan Jaffe

For further information and to contribute to the Greenham suit or Hutchinson's defence, contact Greenham Women Against Cruise, 5 Leonard St., London EC2.

MISCELLANY

Nothing you can say . . .

At last, a practical answer to all despairing socialists who want to know 'What can we *do* to help Labour? Answer: rush out and buy 'My Guy', the new single by Tracey Ullman, the trendy alternative comedian. It will be released on Monday week and the video of the record might even be shown on *Top of the Pops*. All actions to make it a hit and so ensure a large audience for the video will be ideologically sound. Not because she is seen romping round a London council estate, even less because she flies into the arms of a good-looking guy in a dinner jacket – but because of who this good-looking guy turns out to be. He is the MP for Islwyn, the Rt Hon Neil Kinnock.

When to belt up

Last week's news story about the use of 'mediaeval' metal body belts in British prisons mentioned that the Home Office denied the use of such things. It claimed that it only

used ones made entirely of leather. The Home Office continued to deny the use of metal belts when the 'Watchdog' team on BBC TV's *Sixty Minutes* ran the story. In fact, the Prison Department official concerned, John O'Sullivan, actually telephoned the programme's duty editor while *Sixty Minutes* was on the air to insist that metal body belts were absolutely and categorically *not used* in British prisons. The duty editor paid no attention, and so O'Sullivan phoned the editor of *Sixty Minutes* the next day to complain. A little later he phoned again. It had been brought to his attention that the Home Office did have metal body belts after all. Sorry about the confusion.

What's up doc? (1)

Mrs Thatcher was due to be interviewed by the BBC's political editor, John Cole, last week. At the last minute her press secretary, Bernard Ingham, telephoned to make clear that Cole was only allowed to ask the Prime Minister about her forthcoming visit to Hungary. Cole naturally enough was incensed by the idea that he would not be permitted to ask Mrs Thatcher about such vital subjects as GCHQ, Mark Thatcher and the Tory Right. He refused to do the interview, and a few hours later had a heart attack. So now we know who to blame.

What's up doc? (2)

Mrs T is certainly going through a bad patch at home, so it must have been with some relief that she actually flew off to Hungary to play at being the Iron Lady on her first trip to a Warsaw Pact country. Apart from shaking the hands of surprised shoppers in downtown Budapest, she had one main aim. It was to find out the truth about Andropov's state of health. Her host Mr Kadar has been very close to Andropov ever since Yuri was Russian ambassador in Budapest and organised the putting down of the Hungarian uprising. But, despite being closeted with Kadar for over two hours, she drew an absolute blank.

Shermania

Sir Alfred Sherman, the guru to the government, is an enthusiastic rail to road conversionist. He is a member (unpaid) of the team which British Rail set up to look at the feasibility of turning railways into roads. When *The Standard* said last month that Sherman was also a paid consultant to the National Bus Company it quoted Peter Snape MP, a Labour transport spokesman, attacking him. Snape then received the following letter: 'If the *Evening Standard* report is anything to go by, you have grossly libelled and defamed me, accusing me of impropriety and bias.' Sherman says that he cleared the NBC appointment with BR. The letter contains a number of spelling mistakes, such as the Freudian 'redploy' for 'redeploy'. He rounds off with: 'No one will impugn my integrity with impunity. I have the resources for litigation and will deploy them without hesitation to defend my honour unless you are prepared to make an appopriate (sic) apology. You will note that Robert Adley [the Tory MP], whom I am honoured to have as an enemy, had the discretion to launch his attacks from the safety of the floor of the house. You did not, and therefore do not enjoy privilege. At all events, I look forward to a prompt reply.'

Snape replied on 26 January: 'Dear Sir Alf, I think you should know that someone is obviously using your writing paper and, judging by the enclosed, it is not someone of a high standard of education. Perhaps you should make some enquiries'.

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'Reign of terror' in Wandsworth prison

A PRISONER who won the right to have his allegations against prison officers judged in court rather than through the internal prison disciplinary procedure has been refused the right to take legal action against a senior officer who, he alleges, threatens that he will kill him if he does not drop the first proceedings.

Jimmy Anderson, who is a Category A prisoner in Wandsworth prison, wanted the named principal prison officer to be restrained under contempt of court proceedings. But according to Lord Justice Tasker Watkins, who heard the application by Anderson's solicitors on 3 February, there is sufficient 'protection built into prison procedures.' His solicitors were very surprised by this decision, claiming that it amounted to a decision to ignore evidence of a criminal act being committed.

Anderson alleges that his life was threatened on 14 January by the principal officer plus four others. According to Anderson's affidavit, they entered his cell and said he would not leave Wandsworth alive if he proceeded with the action against officers at the Scrubs. Anderson was involved in the protest at Wormwood Scrubs on 16 June last year. After that he was one of the prisoners concerned in the High Court case last November which resulted in prisoners winning the right to request legal representation in internal disciplinary proceedings. In a separate High Court action, Anderson also won the right to institute legal proceedings against prison staff without giving any prior notification to the prison authorities or going through the internal complaints procedure. He is seeking to take proceedings against Wormwood Scrubs prison officers for alleged assults following the June protest.

Tony Banks MP visited Anderson and Daniel Grimes, who witnessed part of the alleged threat on Monday, 30 January. He says that he found both men to be 'credible witnesses', and is demanding an investigation into events in Wandsworth. Tony Banks also says that he was told during his visit that a number of the prisoners involved had gone on hunger strike sometime in the previous week. Banks adds that 'prisoners are not sent to prison to be beaten or harassed and are entitled to the full protection of the law.'

Apart from the threat to Anderson's life, Anderson claims that a letter he wrote to his solicitors, Birnberg and Co, was deliberately delayed and a visiting order to his mother never arrived.

The alleged threat by a senior officer is the latest event in what prisoners and their visiting relatives are now describing as a 'reign of terror' at the prison.

The main allegations centre on a series of brutal assaults against prisoners during January. The allegations are specific with dates and names of prisoners involved:

10 Jan: Danny Grimes attacked and beaten by a large number of prison officers and put in 'strong box'. Attack took place on E1 landing.
John Seabourne beaten and put in 'strong box'. Again attack took place on E1 landing.
Danny Grimes taken from E1 'strong box' to H1 'strong box', beaten again and throttled with a tie. Doctor recorded marks on his neck.

11 Jan: Jimmy McCaig attacked and beaten in cell on H1 landing.

12 Jan: Jimmy McCaig again attacked and beaten in cell and put in H1 'strong box'.

13 Jan: Charlie Dignan taken from E1 to H1 'strong box' and then beaten in 'strong box'.
Rif Memmet attacked in cell, taken to H1 'strong box' and beaten.

21 Jan: Garfield Parnell racially abused, attacked, taken to H1 'strong box' and beaten.

These prisoners carried out a 'dirty' protest in E1 solitary unit on 8 January in protest against what the prisoners describe as 'continual harassment' and 'frequent violence'. Although, they say, they used no violence, they allege that Wandsworth authorities responded to the protest with 'brutality and repression.' On Tuesday, 10 January they were moved to H1 block which is described as a formerly disused, poorly ventilated semi-basement. They are guarded by eight prison officers, instead of the normal four, who enforce a control unit regime.

Terry O'Halloran

Rich Power

Moles' tea party

Speaking of leeks, the best way to defend the planter is to eat them (keeping the sauces hidden) after examining the leaves. This particularly telling bunch was cruelly presented to a mystified Guardian *doorman for his editor Peter Preston and the diarist Alan Rusbridger last Tuesday, on the eve of Sarah Tisdall's court appearance. The presenters were a group of women from an East London peace group.*

Leaks about dumps

ALARMED by the major successes achieved by anti-nuclear power campaigners over the last year, the nuclear establishment is adopting disturbing new tactics. This week's unprecedented police raids on the offices of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth to investigate the leaking of a document dealing with nuclear waste dumping are just another indication of the increasing nervousness of the pro-nuclear lobby.

On Monday afternoon seven plainclothes members of Scotland Yard's serious crimes squad, led by Detective Chief Inspector Ronald Dowling, paid a surprise visit to the London offices of the two pressure groups. At Friends of the Earth they quizzed all the staff about the document and examined typewriters and a photocopier. At Greenpeace they produced a search warrant naming the director Pete Wilkinson as suspected of being in possession of classified documents, interrogated staff and conducted an extensive search of the organisation's files on waste dumping and nuclear fuel reprocessing.

After a couple of hours they left, taking away a bundle of papers from the files – mainly copies of correspondence about Greenpeace's various nuclear waste campaigns, including one letter which names the *New Statesman* as having a copy of the leaked document at an early stage (see *NS* 2 September 1983).

The leaked document, marked 'restricted', is a minute of a meeting in January last year between representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and others. It revealed that the MoD were planning to dump increased amounts of plutonium at sea and that the government's main concern was how to disguise this from the public. It was widely publicised at a press conference last September and contains no information that could conceivably damage national security.

After the leak, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) conducted an internal inquiry and (presumably within the last couple of weeks) passed the matter on to the police, who are now investigating the case as a possible breach of the Official Secrets Act. The police are going to have a hard job finding any moles, partly because the document was leaked over six months ago (a couple of months before it was publicised), and partly because no-one involved has any idea who was responsible for the leak. The document was widely circulated around government departments and defence establishments and could have come from a large number of senior or junior officials.

Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth regard the investigation as another sign that the government is losing the argument over nuclear power. Such investigations, however, help the government justify even tighter security. Greenpeace in particular is becoming increasingly certain that it is under intensive and covert surveillance. Activists point to the fact that British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL) seemed to be very well informed in advance about their detailed plans to block the waste pipe from Windscale (Sellafield) last year. BNFL has recently forced Greenpeace to pay a £36,000 fine (plus £5,500 costs) for planning to interfere with the waste pipe and has an injunction prohibiting such action in the future. As director Pete Wilkinson said: 'We're feeling vulnerable, and we are now paying the price of success.'

Rob Edwards

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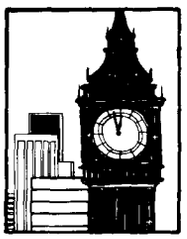

PETER KELLNER Political Editor

There is only one way to ensure majority rule

LAST SUNDAY Dr David Owen appeared on Channel Four's *Face The Press*. As the discussion demonstrated, it is impossible to contemplate the state and prospects of the Social Democrats without looking at Britain's electoral system. Judged by the number of its MPs, it is a tiny party; judged by the total size of its vote last June it is a rather larger one. And, as Dr Owen effectively conceded, his party's prospects of a breakthrough in the next few years depend on whether it can achieve electoral reform.

Since the Conservatives' decisive victory last year, electoral reform has vanished from the immediate political agenda. In the longer term, however, the issue will not go away – at least, not while there is a third force capable of winning between one fifth and one quarter of the vote, but fewer than four per cent of the seats at Westminster. It is hard to defend that degree of distortion.

For Liberals and Social Democrats it is but a short step from denouncing this distortion to proclaiming the virtues of proportional representation, usually in the form of Ireland's system – the single transferable vote. Anyone wishing, or feeling the need, to bone up on STV (and the other main choices for electoral reform) would do well to read a new book, out this week, by Vernon Bogdanor. In *What is Proportional Representation?** Bogdanor reveals himself to be an honest advocate of STV: that is, he supports it not as a perfect system, but the least imperfect of the choices available.

Indeed, in some respects he provides free ammunition to STV's opponents. For example, he demolishes the view of some STV enthusiasts that the system would greatly increase the representation of women and ethnic minorities at Westminster. By comparing the numbers of women elected to the legislatures of different countries, he shows that the way to tackle this area of discrimination is to adopt a system that employs party lists – as do West Germany, Holland and Sweden:

> In the Netherlands a women's group persuaded the Dutch Labour Party to ensure that 25 per cent of its candidates are women, while in the Swedish Liberal and Social Democratic parties, there are pressures for alternate representation of male and female candidates on the party list.

If we adopted a list system, it would be possible for Labour or the Alliance – even the Tories, should they feel so inclined – to ensure much fairer representation at Westminster for both women and ethnic minorities; STV would probably make only a marginal difference.

The real problem with electoral reform, though, concerns the fundamentals of reform itself, rather than the detailed qualities of different systems. Bogdanor writes that the first function of an electoral system is to 'ensure that the majority rules'. Last Sunday, Owen asserted that 'with proportional representation you ensure that the government has the support of 50 per cent of the electorate'. That assertion forms the centrepiece of the case for PR. It sounds convincing; but it is plain wrong.

AT THE CORE of the 'majority rules' argument for PR is a simple *non sequitur*. The argument runs as follows. In most elections no one party will win a majority of votes. Under PR that means no one party will win a majority of seats. So governments will consist of coalitions. Suppose a coalition is formed by party A and party B. Together A's votes and B's votes add to more than 50 per cent. *Therefore* an A-B coalition will have the approval of most voters. It's that *therefore* that causes the problem: it ain't necessarily so.

Suppose, to make a crude analogy, a group of nine people go to a restaurant. They agree to have the same dish, but dispute which dish that should be. Four choose sole meunière, three choose steak au poivre, two choose coq au vin. The 'coalition' argument would suggest all nine should be served sole au vin, or steak meunière, or coq au poivre. Common sense suggests that none of these dishes would go down well, or possibly at all.

As with menus, so with politics. Suppose, under PR, we ended up with a Labour-Alliance coalition following negotiations after an inconclusive general election. Some of those who voted Labour would be committed socialists, wishing nothing to do with the renegades in the SDP; some Alliance voters would be committed anti-socialists who would oppose sharing a bottle of corked claret, far less a Cabinet table, with anyone from the far Left. Far from being a government for which a majority had voted, it would be a government for which nobody had voted.

The response of STV enthusiasts is to say 'look at Ireland'. There, coalitions between Fine Gael and the small Labour Party are mainly the product of pre-election deals, and not imposed on an unsuspecting public only after the votes are in. However, the dynamics of Britain's politics are different from Ireland's. Since part of the Liberal-SDP Alliance's ideological sales pitch is that it detests Labour and the Conservatives equally, it would have good reason not to enter into any pre-election deals. Instead its leadership would have every incentive to play the two main parties off against each other after a hung PR-election result, in order to extract what it considered to be the 'best' terms for coalition partnership.

Dr Owen appeared on Sunday to defend the legitimacy of this kind of government forming by talking about what would happen 'if the country decides to ensure that power is shared'. Again, it is a logically defective statement. Hung Parliaments are not the result of any conscious national decision to produce coalitions – they are merely one possible consequence of aggregating millions of separate, individual decisions to vote for particular parties.

The uncomfortable truth is that no system for electing MPs can guarantee fulfilling Vernon Bogdanor's wish that the majority should rule – if by 'rule' we mean choosing who should form the government. The reason is really very simple. We vote for a Parliament, not for a government. Governments exist by the consent of a majority *in Parliament*. Altering the electoral system would not alter the fact that the immediate mandate for any government comes from MPs and not directly from the people.

There is only one way to change our political system, if we are committed to having governments that command the support of the majority of voters at the time of their election: to elect the executive separately from the legislature and to define their different powers accordingly. President Mitterrand's mandate in France does derive directly from the fact that three years ago more than 50 per cent of those who voted on the second ballot chose him rather than Giscard d'Estaing.

I am not advocating such a change; more to the point, nor are the advocates of electoral reform: it is, for the moment, common ground that we should maintain our system of making executives continuously accountable to Parliament. But, as long as that is the case, advocates of PR must not be allowed to maintain that they alone stand for true majority rule. Last June the Conservatives won just 42 per cent of the UK vote; but had it been a presidential contest along French lines there can – sadly – be little doubt that Mrs Thatcher would have won by miles.

Yet, even if last June's election produced the 'right' Prime Minister, it also produced a manifestly unfair result for the Liberals and the SDP. So what to do? For a start, watch this space. □

*Published by Martin Robertson; £15 hardback, £3.95 paperback

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Barry Lewis/Network

Democracy and the NHS*

Beyond the 'reverse the cuts' slogan

John Rentoul and Phil Cohen report on the latest developments among NHS campaigners

GRASSROOTS health campaigners, who in the past have often been preoccupied with trying to stop hospital closures and job cuts are turning to wider issues such as democracy within the NHS and privatisation.

At the 'Who Cares' conference in Oxford, 300 people heard opposition health spokesperson Michael Meacher outline the changing priorities for Labour Party health policy. They discussed democratising NHS bureaucracy, linking up with the health service unions, and the history of the NHS and what preceded it.

In London, 100 delegates from 31 different campaigns attended the London Health Emergency conference to exchange experiences and look at the way forward. Alyson Bunn, COHSE branch secretary, said it was vital for local campaigns to work with GPs for more preventive medicine and better community facilities.

London Health Emergency coordinator Lucy de Groot told the conference: 'The experience of anti-cuts campaigns in the 1970s showed a lot of activists that it is not enough to defend bits of the service that are there. These may be impersonal and not relevant to people's needs. When you find yourself defending an 1880s workhouse you have to start thinking: "What is this all about?" '

In Oxford, Meacher admitted that a Labour government would probably have followed the same policy of restricting NHS spending as the current Conservative administration. He said the manifesto commitment in the general election to growth of 3 per cent a year on top of inflation had to be regarded as 'the bottom line, if Labour is going to put its money where its mouth is'.

He said there was no alternative to greatly increased spending on the NHS. To shift the emphasis from cure to prevention and from hospitals to community care would cost extra money. But continuing to seek short-term savings without changing priorities was a 'false economy'.

'It is not the structure of the NHS, but the state of the British economy that is the problem,' he said, by implication dismissing not only the NHS management plan put forward by Sainsbury's chief Roy Griffiths, who has been investigating NHS efficiency, but also the criticisms of the non-democratic structure of the NHS made by the 'Who Cares' campaign.

But it was clear that Meacher, appointed health spokesperson only last October after the Labour Party conference, had already taken Labour Party policy a long way in the direction of broadening definitions of health. 'Growth and wealth production have health consequences,' he said, calling for a reappraisal of the 'whole question of the kind of growth we want to see in our society'. He called for a health-promoting economy, and a ban on alcohol and cigarette advertising.

But he ended with the traditional and familiar rallying cry: the Labour Party's aim was 'to make the health services again what they are not today – the best in the world'.

● Michael Meacher's recognition of the need for a health-promoting, rather than a health-damaging, economy is supported by the publication last month of an 'economic, social and policy audit' of the health services. This comprehensive assessment of costs and benefits of health policies, *Health Care UK 1984*, has been produced by the public finance institute CIPFA, which represents NHS treasurers and administrators. One of the more eye-catching sums done by the authors is to work out the output lost through illness and injury, which comes to £40 billion in 1981. This is based on work being carried out by Donald Harris at Wolfson College, Oxford, which found that the average period off work was 42 weeks. The survey excluded absences of under two weeks, and although most absences are under six months, nearly 10 per cent lasted more than two years.

The need to promote a healthier economy, which involves paying attention to the full social cost of things such as cars, tobacco and stress rather than the narrow money costs defined by the market, is a cause being taken up by the 'Green' lobby in health/economic policy.

Anyone interested in joining a 'Green network' should contact the Unit for the Study of Health Policy, 8 Newcomen Street, London SE1. □

*The second two articles here are taken from papers given at the 'Who Cares'/History Workshop/*New Statesman* conference in Oxford last weekend.

What about the spirit of 1948?

Phil Fryer of the 'Who Cares' campaign in Oxford suggests a model for a national 'health movement'

DESPITE the laudable initiatives of local campaigners, the Labour Party, the TUC and other organisations, the new and somewhat disorganised health lobby has a long way to go in political life before it punches its full weight. But time is short. Positive goals must be defined, and a coherent organisation set up, if the nascent 'health movement' is to have any effect. The 'Who Cares' campaign, set up by ten unions in the Oxford region, may provide a model for the wider movement.

From the outset, the campaign set itself

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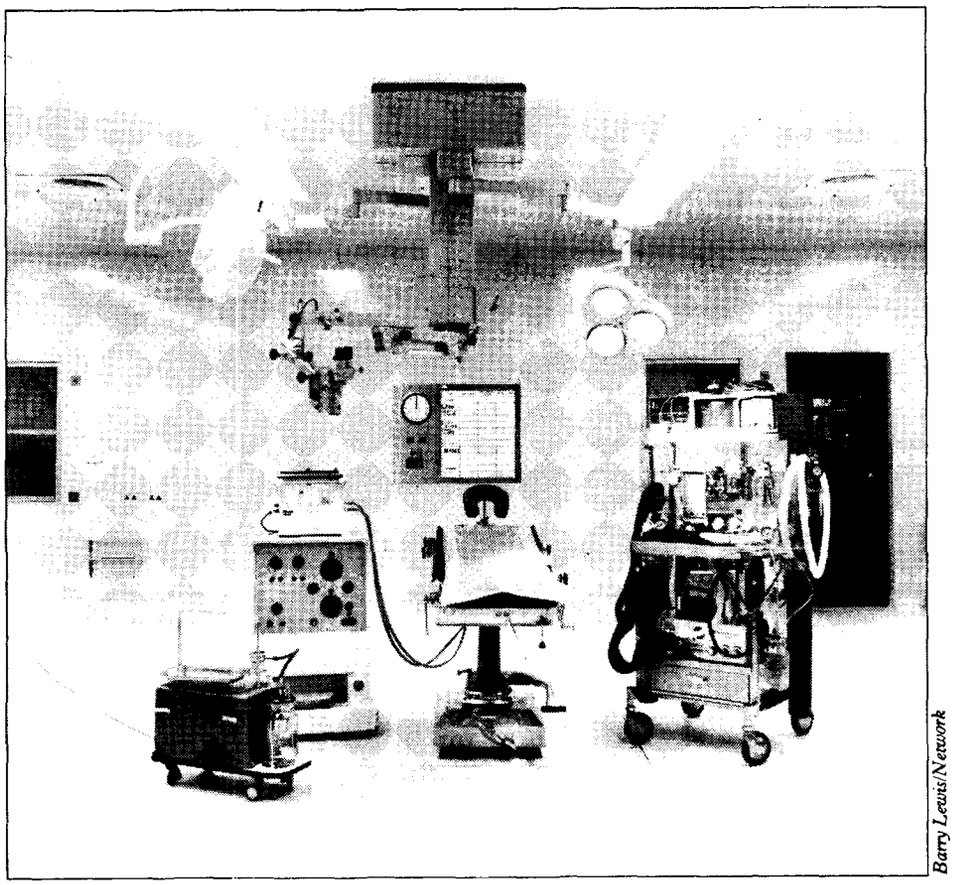

Barry Lewis/Network

Hospital consultants, with an 'inbuilt bias towards high technology and private practice' have too much influence on the long-term priorities of the NHS

the twin aims of campaigning for a change in health priorities and a democratisation of the NHS. At the moment health priorities are decided by the medical profession, without public scrutiny or accountability. It is the vested interest of the doctors which prevents the radical action in health education and primary care that would improve the health, and the equality of health, of the British people.

In putting the case for democracy, the 'Who Cares' campaign has been careful to pose open questions and to make its argument relevant to the present, albeit inadequate, structures. Their charter for democracy in the NHS asks for simple things like the setting up of finance sub-committees on health authorities (which spend billions of pounds of public money every year); suggesting local council members report back to their councils; and encouraging health authorities to establish a more open relationship with the public. 'Who Cares' has also asked local councils in the Oxford region to form health sub-committees, like those in Greenwich and Sheffield, to monitor health services and contribute to health authority affairs.

In the long term the campaign believes health care should be run by elected representatives rather than ministerial appointees, but it should also remain open as to the form this local democracy should take. With 15 out of 16 people prepared to spend more on health, democracy in the NHS would make underfunding on the current scale politically unacceptable.

The idea of democracy has readily attracted groups such as the NHS unions who recognise the need to change health priorities: health educators, community health activists, and the women's movement.

The organisation of the 'Who Cares' campaign, based on the structures of regional and district health authorities (RHAs and DHAs), has integrated campaigning into its programme for the health service. A shadow planning group has been set up to monitor RHA plans and cost out the campaign's perception of health priorities. This shadow planning group includes the trade unions' nominee on Oxford RHA, sympathetic doctors, lawyers and academics. The drawing up of an alternative plan, involving local councils and community groups, should help translate democratic ideas into a democratic practice.

The structure of the shadow planning group is repeated at district level, where trade union nominees and sympathisers on DHAs work with health workers, political parties and interested individuals. But the regional structure of the campaign helps focus local campaigns on the problems of the region as well as the NHS generally and thereby avoid the pitfalls of parochialism and isolation by putting the eight district campaigns in touch with each other. With only 14 regions in England and three health authorities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the regional organisation of 'Who Cares' might well offer a coherent framework for a national campaign. Certainly trade unionists are already organised on this basis, and there is nothing preventing the Labour Party, for example, creating a complementary structure of its nominees on health bodies.

Regardless of the eventual form a national campaign might take, it will only capture the public imagination if it presents a vivid and positive vision for future of health care in Britain. Trade unionists in the Oxford region will be waiting hopefully for signs that the national movement first takes up, and then moves beyond, the spirit of 1948. We need to think not only about health priorities for the 1980s, but also about the democratic structures necessary if those priorities are to be put into effect. □

The local government alternative

C. Harrer makes a controversial proposal for local councils to take over the health service

THE PRESENT CRISIS in the NHS cannot be resolved without recognising the importance of organisation. For the past 15 years this issue has dominated policy making – the latest proposals from the Griffiths inquiry mean a fresh wave of changes, and have split opinion in the NHS down the middle.

The number and variety of solutions proposed or adopted suggests that something is

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wrong with the basic approach to this problem. Many of the difficulties stem from the decision at the founding of the NHS in 1948 to invent an entirely new form of organisation for the hospital service. The system of regional and district authorities has always been remote from the public, and which it has never understood. Yet the greater part of £15 billion a year is dispensed by the non-elected authority members who have no real accountability either to Parliament or the local community. And scrutiny of the constitution and record of these faceless authorities shows many are neither competent to play an informed part in management nor able to serve any real democratic function.

The major reorganisations of 1974 and 1982 have, if anything, worsened the problems of long-term planning in the NHS. The worst failing has been the discontinuity between the health and social service. This defeat is ever more apparent as old age and chronic sickness become one of the most pressing responsibilities of the welfare state.

The biggest institutions – the hospitals – have always dominated reorganisation. The Griffiths proposal to strengthen the hand of central government and its appointed managers will not contribute to the unification of health and social services, or to the transfer of resources into home-based health and social services.

Failure of NHS organisation confirms the principle that ad hoc bodies are inappropriate for administering welfare services. The local government alternative was favoured by NHS planners before 1948 and has remained an ideal behind many of the proposed reorganisations. But the power of professional interests has always deflected Labour governments from their course.

The interests of consultants – highly-paid hospital-based specialists, many of whom have an inbuilt bias towards high technology and private practice – are now firmly entrenched at regional level in the English NHS. Consultants contracts of employment are held by the regions, where they control appointments, and thus determine the financial priorities between specialisms. Thus the long term priorities for the NHS are influenced by the interests of the doctors' closed shop.

In order to bring the planning priorities of the NHS towards the consumer, planners ought to be democratically accountable. But there are objections to the local government alternative, which are understandable historically. Fears of local inequalities derive largely from pre-war experience, because deprived areas had low rateable values. Local authority services are now substantially funded by the exchequer – and consequently controlled by the Treasury. But if the NHS were taken over by local government, health would become *the* major issue of local politics. Forward-looking health policies would attract support from all sections of the electorate, while neglect of the health services would prove electorally disastrous. As campaigns against the cuts indicate, the present administration is insulated from these pressures, with the result that the service can be dismembered without the risk of any electoral penalty. □

RADIOACTIVITY

Polluting suburbs

Andrew Tyler reports on safety fears at 'low-risk' nuclear sites

YOU COULDN'T call the performance of the National Physical Laboratory's director smooth. But there was something in its woodenness, its refusal to pander to emotion, that clinched the support of the public meeting in Teddington, Middlesex last month.

The meeting, on 27 January, had been arranged at the NPL itself to dispose of ugly reports of large-scale radiation 'leaks' from the establishment – particularly the one emanating from the *Daily Express* on 19 January. And so effective was Dr Paul Dean and his high powered top table – it included the official government chemist, the Department of Industry's chief engineer and scientist and local Tory MP Toby Jessell (playing both public defender and laboratory apologist) – that Dean wound up with an ovation while the *Daily Express* was threatened with referral to the Press Council. The *Express* report had been inaccurate, damaging and might well have taken some sap out of house prices, the complaint ran.

As it happened, there were just tiny amounts of stray radiation discovered. A 'routine' survey carried out by a safety team from the Atomic Energy Authority's laboratory at Harwell described them as being no more significant than background levels.

But so far this looks to have been more like good luck than a feat of sound housekeeping. What failed to get discussed at the meeting as all minds were fixed on radiation, was the additional discovery by Harwell of 'widespread traces' of highly toxic beryllium in the same building. Despite these being of a 'low order', Harwell advised that all removeable fittings such as drainwork, sinks, tundishes, associated pipework and fume cupboards be bagged for disposal. Another item of contamination – not yet publicly reported – concerned a drain serving the same area. This has now been blocked off and a plastic bypass constructed.

Whatever Harwell might have announced, it was vital for the government to put a clamp on the attack of anxiety at Teddington. The NPL, after all, is the Department of Industry's scientific house of correction. It sets and maintains standards of measurement for industry, science and medicine. It also assesses and accredits the competence of testing laboratories throughout Britain. If its own credibility was to be damaged, what would happen to the status of other labs?

NPL also represents the cream of 'second division' nuclear establishments. It is just one of 430-odd units authorised by the Department of the Environment to keep and dispose of radioactive substances – some of it down the drain, some on public tips. So far critics have looked to nuclear power plants and MoD establishments as the only substantial sources of radioactive pollution. The NPL incident shows there is need for vigilance on a second front.

The National Physical Laboratory was set up in 1900 and for nearly 50 years was charged with protecting the nation from radiation hazards. In 1958, when radioactivity was recognised as permeating society's every crevice, the job was transferred to the specialist National Radiological Protection Board. The NPL, however, still carries clout in the field through its monitoring and calibration of equipment used in nuclear medicine. This task is undertaken by NPL's Radiation Science and Acoustics (RSA) division which deals with X-ray devices, radionuclides for body scanning and the development of correct radiotherapy doses.

It was in one of the RSA division's 'glove boxes' that Harwell found the most 'radiologically significant' dose. It came from a sealed source of cobalt 60 that would have given out more than three times the 'acceptable' hourly rate if staff members had been present continuously – it seems they weren't.

However, local and press attention was drawn not to this contemporary 'leak' but to the 20-year-old uranium deposits found fixed to several surfaces of one structure at Teddington – building 154.

The 154 area now houses the Materials and Applications division. The contamination itself dates back to the 1950s and early 1960s when, as the National Chemical Laboratory, uranium ore was being analysed for purposes not yet divulged, but under conditions that were clearly less than stringent.

TO FIND small amounts of alpha-emitting particles between cracks in the lino, or on a stool, or several other surfaces, as Harwell did, is perhaps not so astounding given the state of the art in the early 1960s: uranium was not even considered radioactive in those days, merely biologically toxic. What is sur-

***Daily Express* front page 19 January 1984: hitting local house prices**

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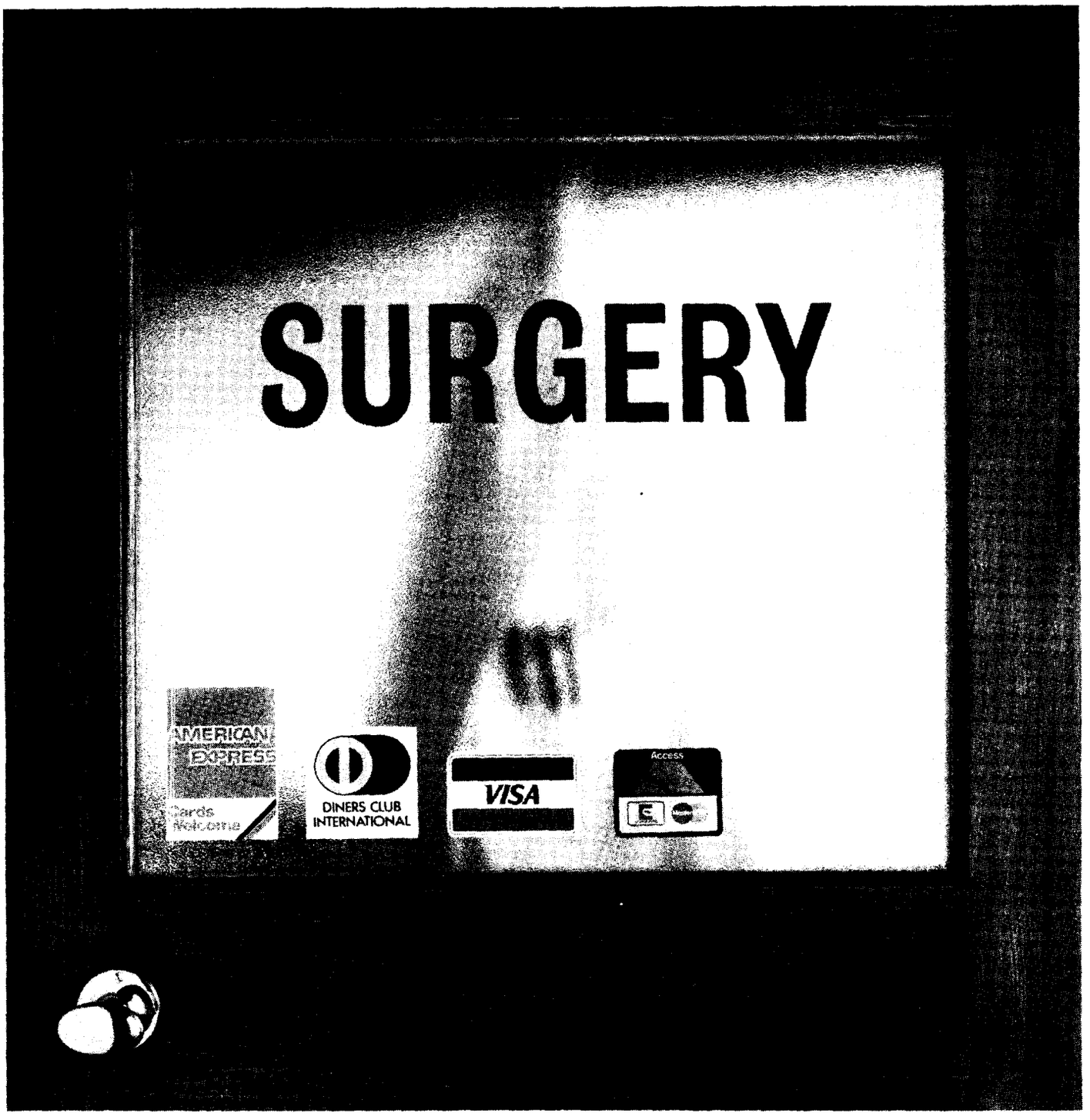

A sickening prospect.

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prising is that the NPL apparently failed for 20 years to test properly for alpha-emitting radiation, or for beryllium, even though it was aware of the building's previous use.

Alpha-emitters, unlike the more powerful beta and gamma rays, discharge little energy over short distances. They can be wrapped up within a single sheet of paper. This also means that, should they get drawn into the body as dust or enter via a wound, they don't easily dislodge. All the energy thereafter is discharged into body tissue, where, in the long term, it performs small but ceaseless damage. It is this that makes alpha-emitters potentially so extremely dangerous.

NPL reports that alpha traces were found when Harwell came to make a routine check of building 154 as a preliminary to demolition: eventually the government chemist is to move to the site.

In fact suspicions about what 154 might hold were established two months earlier in the autumn of 1983, when a 20-year-old radioactive sludge of 'mild and routine proportions' was found in a drain in the area. The pipe, it should be noted, did not lead directly into the public sewers, but into a settling tank, which also dates from the 1960s.

One important question for 154 workers now is what sort of decontamination the building actually received once uranium ore work ceased in the 1960s. An investigation is apparently already under way by order of Information Technology minister, Kenneth Baker. Meanwhile there is a local anecdote that, at the time of the changeover, radiation levels were so high that the monitoring team refused at one stage to work in the building.

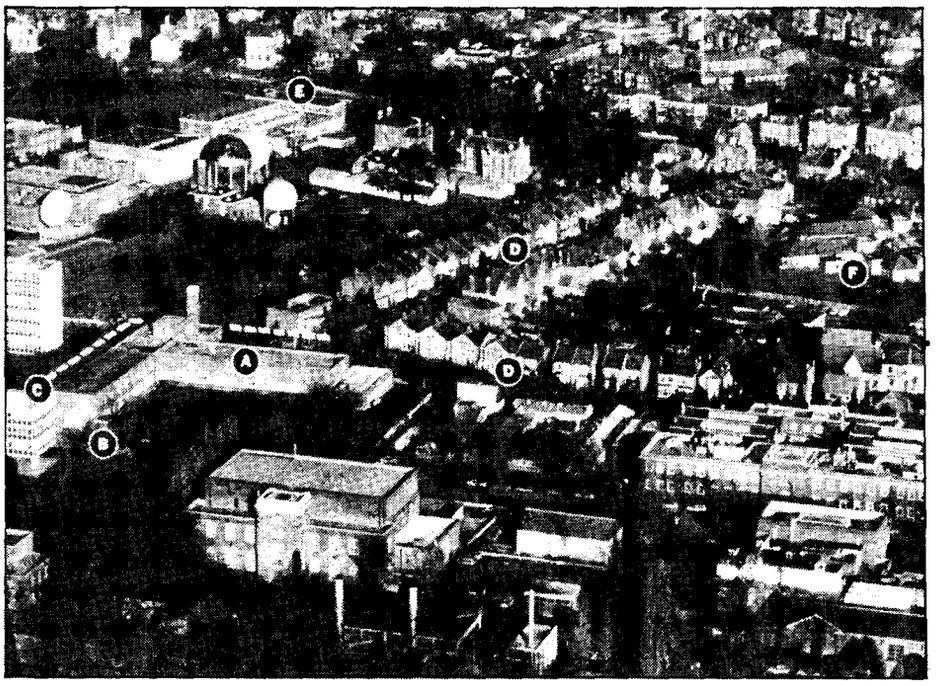
A second question must be that, while only minor traces of 'fixed' alpha emitters remain 20 years on, could any of these substances have been inhaled by staff over the last 30 years? If so, how much, and what else might be dislodged once demolition starts?

I tried to put these and other questions to the Institute of Professional Civil Servants chief safety officer on the site but was told it was 'a matter for the employer and his staff alone'. At the Friday public meeting, the IPCS chairman volunteered that his union was kept informed about 154 from the earliest possible time and that he was satisfied the situation was no cause for concern. Workers from 154 were nonetheless offered an appropriate health check. It was also promised that more information would be shared with the local community to banish any fears they might still harbour for 'that place over the wall'.

THE MISHAPS and poor communications at NPL are not extraordinary for a 'second division' nuclear establishment. In fact they are fairly mild examples of what can go wrong within a poorly regulated system whose 'agreed' radiation exposure limits are considered by some unions and critical scientists to be outrageously high.

Sheila McKechnie, ASTMS's health and safety officer, has logged the following recent events as typical:

- At Essex County Hospital Americium 241 was used for research and then simply stored in a plastic container for three years. When a leak was discovered in 1979, ASTMS members used buckets and mops to sloosh up the alpha and gamma emitting material.
- A sealed source of Ceasium 137 intended as a charge level indicator was stored in a workman's hut on an industrial site. At a Yorkshire magistrates court in 1980, the company was fined £2,500 under the Ionising Radiation (Sealed Sources) Regulations 1969.
- At Lancaster University's environmental sciences department an alpha-emitting isotope was found last October to have been improperly stored in a fume cupboard instead of a glove box. As a consequence the whole lab was heavily contaminated and had probably been so for two years. The monitoring unit that should have discovered the leak was found to be faulty. It was last checked by a YOP worker.



National Physical Laboratory, the government research centre in Teddington, Middlesex. 'A' indicates building 154, close to private homes; 'B': security gate; 'C': public footpath; 'D': houses 20 yards from contaminated building; 'E': north gate to complex; 'F': Teddington Memorial Hospital

Such incidents are possible in universities, hospitals and industrial sites throughout the UK, Ms McKechnie notes. And she thinks this will continue for so long as controls and safety guidelines remain ineffectual.

There is, in fact, a new package of regulations on the way, with codes of practice designed to suit the varying conditions under which radioactive substances are deployed. The code will key into the Health and Safety at Work Act; the standards deriving from those hammered out by an international commission (ICRP). The Health and Safety Executive was obliged under an EEC directive to implement them a year ago but it has been tied up by arguments on several fronts.

Not least there is a dispute over the 'acceptable' international exposure standards of 5 rems per worker per year. Sheila McKechnie calls this 'monstuously high . . . at least ten times'. She claims this level has been put on the books for the benefit of gross polluters like Windscale who say they can't get any lower. And the HSE now indicates as 'little' as 1.5 rems will in fact be a case for action – if not through the courts. But this too is regarded as absurdly high for second division establishments such as hospitals which, claims McKechnie, would be able to operate with virtually no controls at all and still conform to the standards.

There are further complaints about 'long, unintelligible' codes of practice being no more than rules for individual workplaces that can be drawn up by 'radiological protection advisers' who require no special qualifications other than that they be a 'suitable person'. There are also worries about enforcement, since the HSE will say it is already stretched concentrating on the high risk areas.

The view now developing among some unions is that the Windscales and Sizewells (if it comes) should be considered and dealt with separately. This might allow serious and much lower safety levels to be established for the second division units.

Other gains could be had from the HSE issuing clearer guidance notes; and ordering that whoever frames safety rules be more than just a 'suitable person'.

The NPL episode has at least helped focus on some of these issues. It also teaches us that even in the government's house of calibration there is a history of error and perhaps more. It shows us that the public ultimately wants to be soothed by the white-coated voice of the eminently qualified; that employees tend to close ranks and act as apologists for their employer, because to believe something is wrong is to acknowledge their own vulnerability. For the same reason, a whole community – worried about house prices – closes ranks against the agitated voice of the press.

This time it was the overheated *Daily Express*. But it seems the residents of Seascale are not grateful either to James Cutler for his Yorkshire TV programme, exposing Windscale's health hazard. □

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*NOP Market Research Ltd., July/Nov. 1983

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POLITICS

Shifting sands

Is the Left in disarray – or regrouping round some new relationships? Sarah Benton reports from a public debate this week

NOT UNTIL the very last ten minutes of the dense two and a half hour public debate did Eric Hobsbawm say what he really feels about politics today: that it should be judged by the lessons of the politics of fifty years ago. 'Anyone who doesn't believe that the Broad Front did turn around politics doesn't know what they're talking about', he told the packed main hall at Friends House, Euston Road on Tuesday night. 'The Broad Front policy of the '30s was designed to turn round defeat into a situation where the Left could take the initiative. It achieved far more than any Trotskyist movement has done'. But, warned the old communist, a Broad Front must have as its core the labour movement, meaning in reality the Labour Party.

Such a political strategy for wringing eventual victory (ten years, one 'holocaust' and one world war later, which the retired history professor did not mention) out of disaster depends on believing that the present situation *is* disastrous. Although Hobsbawm stopped short of saying the Thatcher government is slipping and stomping its way towards the 1980s version of fascism, this fear must be inferred from his argument.

Curiously for such a crucial issue, deciding on how disastrous the times are appears to be a matter of personal feeling. There are no agreed, objective criteria for measuring danger levels. In the language of the current debate, there are merely optimists, pessimists and, as Robin Cook said of Stuart Hall, manic depressives. If last Tuesday's event had been intended as a debate between these emotional tendencies then it failed; the optimists had not been invited to attend.

Rather, the purpose of the debate was to wheel into public view the new axis that has formed on the Left. Organisationally, the axis runs from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (a soft Left grouping within the Labour Party) to the middle of the Communist Party. This is not a very great distance. But such an axis puts both the LCC and the 'eurocommunists' in a stronger position for their separate fights for dominance in their own parties.

Journalistically, this group inscribes its thoughts in the *New Socialist*, *Marxism Today* and the *New Statesman*. Of the five people on the platform – Harriet Harman, Robin Cook, Peter Kellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Beatrix Campbell – and the two fixers sitting behind them – Martin Jacques and Peter Hain – only Harriet Harman had not contributed to the debate in either the *New Statesman* or *Marxism Today* in the last nine months. This may have been why several disappointed people said the debate had told them little new, little that they had not already read or thought about.

It is possible therefore to state what, within this axis, there is a substantial measure of agreement about:

1) Labour suffered a crushing defeat at the last election from which it will not automatically recover
2) Women pose an unavoidable political problem
3) Tony Benn is no longer the standard-bearer of the Left, and has taken himself beyond the pale of political influence
4) 'Democracy' is a more potent keyword than 'equality'
5) Any political strategy must continue to acknowledge the centrality of the Labour Party as the mass party of the working class
6) Winning popular support for basic socialist policies is more important than winning a party branch majority for more esoteric ones.

Each one of these points may seem blindingly obvious to its supporting constituency. Nonetheless, taken together they comprise a political consensus that did not exist a year ago. How much of an alliance can be built on such a consensus will only become clear as the debate persists. Despite the talk of alliances, only Harriet Harman referred to CND or the peace movement. Despite the anxiety about Labour's lost millions, nobody referred to the political link between unemployed youth and their interest in ecology, disarmament and 'culture' – as opposed to apprenticeships, heavy industry and branch meetings.

IT WAS the difference over women which might have proved the most fruitful area of public debate had feminism appeared as more than a side-show in political controversy, or the women speakers as more than the female back-up for the leading men. Beatrix Campbell argued that it is proper to describe the labour movement as the men's movement, a movement which works to secure men's privileges. Thatcherism is popular because it appeals to men's masculinity, women's femininity. Labour is unpopular because it cannot deliver these sexual rewards, presumably because it has become less sexist.

Politically there is no simple agreement among women, or among feminists. Should feminism be advancing as a separate force gaining the power to liberate women and to reform socialism? Or should it mingle its strengths with those of socialism, seeking some sort of mixture of the two? Do the articles by Lynne Segal, Doreen Massey and Hilary Wainwright (*New Socialist* no 15), Jean Gardiner (*Marxism Today*, February) and Sheila Rowbotham (*New Statesman* 27 January) put them on the side of the optimists (and thus out of the axis) or are they evidence of the irrelevance of the mainstream debate for women?

The end of economic growth, the successive votes for a Tory government and fear of political extermination have made the Left far more receptive to the thoughts of their 'intellectuals', and this in turn is creating a new reputation for the Grand Old Men (sic) of the marxist Left. Such intellectuals have long felt excluded from Britain's party political life; not surprisingly, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Ralph Miliband were among the most enthusiastic supporters of the establishment of the Socialist Society two years ago. What Tuesday's debate also marked was this shifting relationship between intellectuals and activists. One voice, usually strong in its demand that all such talk take place within the Labour Party, if it has to take place at all, was notably missing at the debate. This was the voice of Eric Heffer (*Marxism Today* December 1983). He was speaking with Neil Kinnock at a Labour Party rally which had been organised in London at exactly the same time. □

Robin Cook, Harriet Harman, Peter Kellner, Eric Hobsbawm and Beatrix Campbell on the platform at Tuesday's debate

News Line

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DIARY

Robert Kilroy-Silk

I laughed at Brian Sedgemore a couple of weeks ago when he suggested to me that the Prime Minister might have to resign over the Mark Thatcher affair. Now I'm not so sure. Certainly there is a case to answer. Peter Shore thinks so too. He has now added the authority and weight of the Shadow Cabinet to the campaign conducted almost alone until now by Brian Sedgemore and Dale Campbell-Savours to get the Prime Minister to make a statement in the House.

They're an unusual, not to say strange, duo. They're also a very formidable team. With artfully constructed and delicately articulated points of order, and questions to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the House, and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, among others, and a little help from the *Observer*, they have kept the issue alive and moving. And all the time Sedgemore has behaved impeccably, even to the extent of a 'Dear Margaret' . . . 'Yours, Brian' letter, assuring her that his questioning her conduct on the Oman contract was not personal. Of course the Prime Minister's children are entitled to their privacy. They are not entitled to profit from their mother's job and Prime Ministerial patronage without being the proper subject of scrutiny and criticism. At least Harold Wilson's kids went quietly about getting their degrees and qualifications and then obtaining proper jobs.

○

Brian Sedgemore feels very strongly about the whole thing. That he called the quiet, inoffensive, unprepossessing, and ineffective Paul Channon a 'supercilious git' is evidence of that. Perhaps that is why he was allowed to get away with it and why *Hansard* altered the record to, 'Just answer it'. Denis Skinner had no such luck. He got his marching orders for nothing more than calling John Selwyn Gummer 'a hypocrite' on the much more serious subject of deaths in mines. Not, of course, that the publicity will do Denis any harm. It never has in the past.

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The Prime Minister and Sir Geoffrey Howe are not the only members of the government with a credibility problem. The Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, takes some beating for his sleight of hand. For over a year now he has been holding remand prisoners in police and court cells below ground in London in appalling conditions. As a result of pressure from MPs, lawyers and probation officers, he made a promise last July to stop using them by the end of 1983. Following the publication of an article of mine in *The Times* on 14 December pointing out that there were still 478 persons held in police cells, he replied in an article published on 4 January that 'all police cells had been cleared of remand prisoners on 30 December'. He had redeemed his pledge. So there! We all knew, of course, that he had been successful only at the cost of overcrowding elsewhere in the penal system, notably at Grendon, but it was a price that seemed necessary in the circumstances. What we did not expect was that his action would be totally cosmetic – would last only long enough for him to be able to claim to have kept his word. We now know that the cells were empty for a mere *four days*. The number of prisoners held in police cells has steadily increased from three on 3 January to 71 on 27 January.

I wonder if he cheats at cards.

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Merseyside has been receiving its usual slice of publicity again this week. Yet more redundancies. This time it's the turn of BAT. Liverpool will take the brunt of the 1,840 jobs to be lost. Last week it was BICC with the announcement of 350 redundancies in Prescot. Hardly a week, some would say a day, goes by without further factory closures or job losses. In the recent past we have seen the loss of important and major employers like Courtaulds, Tate & Lyle, Hygena and Metal Box. My own constituency has the third highest level of unemployment in the country, we have a borough-wide unemployment rate of 40 per cent, some 85 per cent of our school-leavers are unemployed or on temporary schemes and, in Kirkby, 7,000 people are chasing 15 vacancies. And the government's response? *A Freeport*. Our front bench was right to rubbish the proposal. They are as cosmetic an exercise as are the Enterprise Zones and likely to create as few real jobs.

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At least Matthew Parris's week-long affair with the unemployed might end up achieving something positive. My Bennite GP, Bob Green, was so incensed by the way Parris spoke dismissively of the problems of the unemployed that he has promised to beat him in the London Marathon and is getting himself well sponsored to do so for charity. 'Yes,' I cautioned, 'but what if you lose? Parris is a 2 hr 38 man.' No problem. He's got Parris to promise that he'll donate his winnings to the cause of the unemployed. Pledges of support to me at the House of Commons please. It's one we can't lose.

○

Talking about affairs, the BBC *Panorama* team seems to be infatuated by right-wing politics at the moment. Hot-foot from their exposure of far-right racist infiltrators of the Tory party, they all duly turned up at a lively party to celebrate *Klaus Barbie* – the Butcher of Lyons. Michael Cockerell was there, so was David Dimbleby, and so also were their counterparts in *TV Eye* and *World In Action*. Tom Bower, a *Panorama* producer, was also present. But then he would have been. It was his book that was being published. The book itself was hard to find – hidden, it seems, in a cardboard box in a dark corner of the room – but, unlike my own, prominently displayed in W. H. Smith's the day after publication. Perhaps there's something to be said for sending manuscripts to Michael Joseph.

ROGER WODDIS

Every Which Way But Luce

'I want to assure you that we and our multinational force partners are assessing and weighing up very, very carefully the implications of what is happening.' – Richard Luce, Foreign Office Minister of State, on the Lebanon crisis

The situation's very grave,
But though a chap confuses
The Shi'ites with the Maronites,
The Sunnis with the Druzes,
We are resolved to free ourselves
From this unholy tangle
By looking very carefully
At every awkward angle.

In weighing up the pros and cons
And all the complications,
Whether to stay, or cut and run,
Along with other nations,
While noting that the task we face
Is certainly titanic,
We shall not be precipitate,
But pause before we panic.

Our object is to keep the peace
And work for independence
By putting on our boldest front,
Before we dance attendance;
And if the troops are summoned home,
It must be on condition
That we consult with Mr Shultz
And ask for his permission.

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Modern slavery

British clothes companies enthuse about 'low labour costs': Ed Harriman found out what this means for the girls in Bangkok factories

BANGKOK TODAY is the knocking shop of the Far East. It is also the largest pool of really cheap labour for the clothing industry worldwide. And that means women and girls working endlessly in sweatshops behind the interminable rows of sewing machines.

Talk to a buyer from any of a dozen British importers and retailers in the rag trade, the story is the same. You can buy T-shirts from mainland China dirt cheap, but they are poorly made. Hong Kong is now expensive, making stylish clothes on expensive machinery for the better western brand names. But if you want to buy a lot of sweaters, jumpsuits, anoraks, T-shirts, etc., that are well made, delivered on time and dirt cheap, go to Bangkok. The factories are all in the centre of the capital. 'And then there's the "nightlife" if you want to put your feet up. Know what I mean . . .'

Scores of British clothing buyers do, usually travelling out twice a year to place orders with Bangkok factory owners, to be followed later by quality control inspectors sent out from Britain to ensure that production and specifications match.

It is big business. Last year British firms imported over 100 times more clothing, in value terms, from Thailand (almost entirely from Bangkok factories) than eight years ago. Littlewoods, Woolworth, Great Universal Stores (GUS), John Lewis, Debenhams and C & A are the biggest companies involved.

In Spring 1982, Dodwell International, a part of the Inchcape group which acts as an agent for several British firms in the Far East, handled £5 million worth of clothing from Thailand for Great Universal Stores alone. Those goods were on sale in GUS's catalogues last year, with mark-ups in the region of 300 per cent on the Bangkok price. GUS's pre-tax profits exceeded £200 million for the first time last year.

For most companies business this year is even better. The reason, clothing executives readily admit, is 'cheap labour'. Talking at a private seminar organised by the National Economic Development Office just over a year ago Paul Harris, GUS's merchandising director, put it quite bluntly: 'No level of technological change can outweigh the impact of low labour costs,' he said. 'GUS will continue to source from low cost areas and', he added for good measure, 'insist on higher margins on imported goods.'

Ralph Warburton, Littlewood's merchandising director, was even more to the point, speaking at a clothing exhibition organised by NEDO last year. Why didn't he buy more clothing from British manufacturers, he was asked. Because they had become 'spoonfed, cushioned if you like', and 'had got very fat and lazy'.

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Younger Thai girls are paid less than £1 a day to make this charming outfit

To find out exactly what this term 'cheap labour' means *World in Action* producer David Darlow and I went to Bangkok, posing as British clothing buyers. What we saw in several factories manufacturing in bulk for the UK makes Mr Warburton's explanations of why British companies are buying in the Far East extremely tawdry.

Factory one: Fortune Garment

THE FORTUNE Garment factory is managed and owned by Mr Bundit Lertnimitr and his father and mother. In common with virtually all factory owners in Bangkok, they are overseas Chinese, and have been selling to the UK for about a decade. GUS gave them their first British order and business has been constantly expanding ever since.

Mr Bundit has a virtue which one does not always come by in the rag trade. He is honest. He has a couple of hundred machines on the first and second floors of a building deep in Bangkok's Chinatown. In the alleyways behind are three narrow dwellings he uses as dormitories for the nearly 250 girls working there. There is no air conditioning, few fans, and the open toilets are often blocked.

Mr Bundit describes conditions in his factory as 'not good', largely because the girls have to sleep feet to feet on the rough floors of his dormitories. 'They retire at 11 o'clock, near midnight, they have to stay taking a bath until maybe 1 o'clock, and they don't complain.' Then they're up again to begin working at 8 o'clock the next day, seven days a week. Sometimes, which means a lot of the time, the girls work through the night.

For this his younger girls, who are in their early teens, are paid less than £1 a day, which is half the official Thai minimum wage.

There is no real overtime pay and wages are held back to keep his charges from leaving. Last year these girls made, Mr Bundit says, some 12,000 three-piece woven acrylic women's suits and 3,500 similar two-piece suits for GUS, as well as thousands of sweaters. Mr Bundit says GUS paid him £4.74 for both the three-piece and two-piece outfits, which is cheap. The same garments were sold throughout Britain at £19.99.

There is, Mr Bundit explains, an unwritten agreement among the Bangkok factory owners not to put wages up without consulting the others. Few firms offer contracts, most prefer to employ girls on the basis of 'trust'. 'No contracts, no problems,' Mr Bundit succinctly explained.

Factory owners shy away from employing girls who have lived in Bangkok for fear that they are much too streetwise and can fend for themselves. Poor, illiterate, uneducated farm girls from Thailand's impoverished north and northeast are the employees of choice. They work hard, ask few questions, and don't complain.

This may sound strikingly familiar to conditions in British factories described by Frederick Engels, Edwin Chadwick, Thomas Carlyle and others writing in the 1840s. But Malee Pruekpongsawalee, who lectures in labour law at Bangkok's Thammasat University, believes the conditions are more like those in Britain half a century earlier.

The 1802 Bill of Sir Robert Peel the Elder, often regarded as the first Factory Act, prohibited night work for many factory children, insisted they be given some schooling, and allowed them to work only 12 hours a day. In 1844 this was reduced to 6½ hours a day for children under 13, who also had to have three hours of instruction a day. On the strength of these Acts alone, the British clothing industry could not a hundred years ago have legally employed girls on the same basis as the Thai girls in

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Bangkok are making sweaters, T-shirts and suits for GUS and other British retailers today. In effect, buying in Bangkok enables British firms to circumvent over 150 years of British social legislation.

Factory two: Dynasty Fabrics

PERHAPS there shouldn't be a dole in Britain. Mr Sandej Vayakornvichitre, managing director of Dynasty Fabrics, believes so. It adds to the social cost of production, he says. He also thinks that British workers have too many paid holidays, that unions should not be allowed, and that legislation is there for the breaking, something he not only espouses, but puts into effect.

He has registered his factory, which employs about 300 women and girls, as two firms to circumvent regulations allowing for workers' representatives. He ships separates (tops and skirts or shorts) as two-piece sets to Britain to get around the Multifibre Agreement quotas. And he pays his girls, many of whom are only 13 and 14 years old, well below the 65 baht (£2) minimum daily wage.

The girls sleep in cubicles crammed together inside the factory. Most of them have to buy their own rice, and as with many Bangkok clothing factories they often work through the night. Mr Sandej says that GUS is one of his better customers.

Mr Sandej makes no secret of his enlightened views. He regularly shows British buyers around his premises, talking all the time. And what do the buyers say? 'They don't say a thing. They're smiling. They're happy.'

One of Dodwell's ex-employees in the Far East confirmed to us that British buyers doing business with Dynasty have not only visited the factory, but have certainly seen the little girls there sitting in circles on the floor sewing on buttons and cutting threads.

According to Thailand's labour laws, girls working in factories must be paid fair overtime rates, they must not work all night, and they must be given regular holidays, and, if the factory is large enough, the right to organise. Furthermore, if girls under 15 are employed they can only do so with a written note from their parents, a medical certificate, and a school certificate all of which are required before a government official will issue them with a permit.

In not one case did we come across a girl for whom all these permissions had been obtained. How old are you? is the only question most of the girls seem to remember being asked, followed usually by a sharp reminder that if they work hard they will earn good money, if they don't they will be sacked.

British buyers, of course, could argue that it is none of their concern as to whether their suppliers are breaking local Thai laws. They could hardly claim, however, that they don't know that regular and gross infringements in the factories they buy from are taking place. But how is it possible that such lawbreaking is commonplace? Thailand, after all, is ruled effectively by a military junta which values discipline, order and national self-respect. There are thousands of police, paramilitary and undercover agents, brigades of whom could, should the government wish, be deployed to see that Bangkok's factories abide by the country's excellent legal code. Sadly, most people know better than to expect that to happen.

Girls at Thai Thon Knitting, whose jumpers retail at a 200 per cent mark-up in the UK

For the government's concerns are heavily skewed towards the Thai elite's continued self-aggrandisement and enrichment while keeping communism at bay. National economic development has become an accelerated process of corruption and naked exploitation in which the basic resource to be plundered is Thailand's swelling population itself.

In case anyone should be in doubt, Thailand's Minister of Industry, Mr Ob Vasuratna, recently argued that circumstances are not about to change. 'Thai labour still has a long way to go to understand its responsibilities and the concept of responsible democracy,' he said. 'I believe that the concept of a minimum wage is not appropriate at the moment, for Thailand is still a developing country, a poor country, which needs all its people to work together, and work harder.'

Factory three: Thai Thon Knitting

GIRLS at the Thai Thon factory, which makes attractive embroidered sweaters for Littlewoods and other British firms, 'go to the movies on Sundays'. In fact, the manager, Mr Sakchai Banreuesin, is quite impressive. The girls are all over 17, well, except for a few of them. They live comfortably in dormitories on the roof of the factory where they sleep on the floor, much as they do in their homes in Thailand's northeast. And they earn at least 100 baht (£3.30) a day. And how can Mr Sakchai and his father afford to pay so much? 'If we don't we can't keep the good ones and they go away.' Why then is there a guard at the factory gate? Mr Sakchai has a problem with telling the truth. ▷

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But Thai Thon does produce lovely sweaters, little white, pink and blue pullovers with pretty ribbons and flowers sewn on for Littlewoods. Mr Sakchai says he shipped Littlewoods 48,000 of them last year, and another 51,600 which are in the shops now.

Mr Sakchai claims Littlewoods paid about £1.65 each for the jumpers, which are now selling for £4.99 – a mark-up of over 200 per cent. To Ralph Warburton this is one of the benefits of 'international competition'. But at the Thai Thon factory such profit-taking is borne out of conditions which have many of the appearances of what can be empirically described, quite aside from any emotional connotations, as modern slavery.

As at other Bangkok factories we talked to girls working at Thai Thon. Mr Sakchai has indeed provided sleeping quarters for them on the roof – seven bare rooms separated by partitions where 250 girls sleep crowded against each other. He also gives them rice, even when they work all night, which tends to happen frequently. But they have to buy the rest of their food.

That is where the guard comes in. He watches the girls who are allowed out to the nearby food stalls at break time. He chases strangers away, and hustles the girls back inside if they linger or strike up conversations. The girls don't go to the movies on Sundays, they said. If the older ones say that their relatives have come to see them they can, just possibly, fake a few hours away. But the little ones – the 12 and 14 year olds, and there are many of them – don't have that chance. They are kept locked within Mr Sakchai's factory compound and there is no way they can freely leave.

It is obviously unreasonable to assume that British buyers have talked with the girls in Bangkok factories. It is not unreasonable to assume that they have seen their hollow sunken faces, their anaemic smiles, their flat deadened eyes which light up for an instant when strangers come by and then cloud over as they return to their workpiles. And their absolute youth. In fact, as in the other factories, Mr Sakchai assured us that British buyers have been shown around and know how his factory operates.

In 1982 British clothing retailers imported £1.5 billion worth of goods from overseas and nearly half of them came from the Far East. While many British factories are working well below full production – that is those which have not closed down – in Bangkok, all the factories we visited had full order books and were working, literally, throughout the night. According to documents provided by the Thai Ministry of Commerce, Bangkok factories came within a few hundred garments of filling their quotas for Britain last year. This year should be the same.

GUS and Littlewoods declined to discuss their purchasing policies in public, yet their policies seriously affect Britain's balance of trade. The companies buy at the cheapest price they can find and sell as dearly as they think the great British public will stand. And profits are up, in no small part due to buying from factories such as those in Bangkok.

There is perhaps one small consolation. The young girls at Fortune Garment, Dynasty, Thai Thon and other Bangkok sweatshops may work all night, eat precious little but bowls of rice, sleep in conditions fit for pigs – all for a few bob at the end of the month. But as social reformers and champions of free trade and economic developement will no doubt point out, unlike hundreds of thousands of their sisters they have not had to sell to Littlewoods, GUS, or anyone else their virginity. □

Ed Harriman is a journalist on Granada's World in Action *programme. 'Rags to Riches' was broadcast on 6 February at 8.30pm on ITV.*

FRANCE

Socialists deflated

'Keynesianism in one country' has failed. What next? asks Chantal Mouffe

FRANCE'S socialist government is entering its most difficult phase since coming to power. For the first time the unity of the left is at stake as relations between the socialists and both their communist coalition partners and the communist-controlled trade union confederation, the CGT, become strained by President Mitterrand's policies for the industrial modernisation of France.

Last month, Georges Marchais, secretary general of the communist party, PCF, severely criticised the government's economic and industrial policies in a report to the central committee of his party. Issuing an ultimatum to the socialists – 'Not one more redundancy from now on' – he argued that mass layoffs were not a necessary part of the restructuring of French industry. 'Technical progress does not necessarily mean fewer jobs. It can be used to increase production, thereby providing more jobs.' Marchais claimed the only solution for the industries in crisis was to reconquer the domestic market, not to close plants or dismiss workers.

Later, speaking on television, Marchais went on to accuse the President of being unfaithful to his election manifesto which had put the struggle against unemployment as the top priority. But he also reasserted the communists' intention to remain in government to fight for the workers' interests. However, it is now bound to be a 'critical participation', with PCF being even more reticent than it was during the period of 'participation without support' which so irritated the socialists.

Certainly, the brief honeymoon which followed the one-day summit last December when the socialists and PCF renewed their agreement is over. The communists have decided to oppose the plans for industrial restructuring. At the beginning of a year when between 50,000 and 150,000 jobs are due to be lost in steel, coal, shipbuilding, construction, engineering, chemicals and cars, M Marchais's warning augurs a very rough ride for the coalition.

The new communist militancy is partly a reaction to the fiasco at the Talbot car plant at Poissy, where an agreement for redundancies between the communist minister for employment, Jack Ralite, and the management was supported by the CGT, but rejected by the rank-and-file immigrant workers. They turned to the pro-socialist union, the CFDT, which led the revolt against what it considered to be a government directive.

If Marchais has decided to come out against the economic policies of the socialists, it is also partly because there is much resentment in his party concerning the now evident conversion of the government to a completely different economic strategy. First, only the practice was changed and the old rhetoric was maintained. Recently even the discourse is being adapted in the name of 'realism'. The failure of the first phase of reflation brought serious inflation and balance of payments problems that undermined the franc and led to a dangerous increase in foreign debt. The government response was to introduce a temporary wage and price freeze in June 1982. At that time, the socialists pretended it was only a 'pause' and claimed the train of reform would soon be back on the rails. But when the franc was devalued again in March 1983, it became obvious that these harsh policies were there for some time and that tougher fiscal action was needed. The government introduced new taxes and various other measures to reduce demand by the equivalent of some 2 per cent of GNP. And so the solitary experiment of 'Keynesianism in one country' ended and France joined her partners in deflating.

The government did its best to combine the struggle against inflation with measures to stop unemployment rising, to increase the

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income of the lowest-paid workers and to maintain the level of social benefits. But the socialists began to realise that the crisis was not the invention of the right but a deep structural one. It was a crisis that could only be remedied by technological changes – changes that would have to take place in a country where the productive structure had been allowed to become obsolete because previous governments had not had the courage to take the political risks inherent in modernisation. As the young minister for industry and research, Laurent Fabius, put it recently: 'General de Gaulle undertook the transformation and modernisation of our institutions. Our task is to put into effect the economic and social transformation . . . to carry through industrial change, taking the human aspects into consideration as far as possible.'

The problem is how to reorganise industry without splitting the forces of the left and how to modernise the industrial apparatus while not tearing the social fabric to pieces. The three most affected areas – coal, steel and shipbuilding – all have strong regional implications. In many cases, by closing a plant a whole town or region is condemned.

ATTEMPTING to avoid a 'savage' restructuring of the British kind, Pierre Mauroy the prime minister, has just proposed a two-year paid-leave scheme to allow workers laid off by modernisation programmes to retrain. During their retraining, these workers would keep links with the business or industries where they used to work. This scheme would be coupled with the creation of 'renaissance zones' where special fiscal advantages would be available for industries providing new jobs for retrained workers in the areas worst hit by the collapse of traditional industry.

But this plan has been met with scepticism by the unions. Who, they ask, is going to pay for it? It is difficult to imagine the government asking for new sacrifices from the very companies whose financial situation it is trying to improve.

On a different front, tax and social security payments have been pushed as far as is publicly acceptable. President Mitterrand recently acknowledged this and promised a reduction for 1985. But at the same time, he put a limit of 3 per cent of GNP on the budget deficit. So the question of where the money is to come from still remains.

Inside the socialist party, some are arguing that these tight budgetary constraints must be relaxed in order to finance the social measures and the creation of new jobs that must accompany the industrial restructuring. It is the position not only of the left-wing CERES group but also of some Mitterrandist supporters. Jean-Pierre Chevènement, the CERES leader, declared at a recent socialist party committee that 'industrial change was not possible in a deflationary context'. CERES believes that it is important to preserve the average purchasing power of wages because it is vital to sustain domestic demand in order to maintain the level of industrial activity. They are pleading for a further 2 per cent growth in 1984.

This is not the opinion of the economics minister Jacques Delors, who considers that given the international constraints imposed on France, the absolute priority must be to carry on with the struggle against inflation and to restore the equilibrium in the balance of payments. Spectacular results were obtained in 1983, with more than a 50 per cent reduction in the deficit. But several years of effort are still necessary. According to Delors, any attempt to reflate now would be disastrous since it would lead to a jump in imports similar to that of 1981. He has made it clear that he could not serve in a government that abandoned strict financial restraint to satisfy the communists and CERES.

The other debate concerns the pace of industrial restructuring. President Mitterrand and the industry minister Laurent Fabius favour a short, sharp shock, attacking all the problems at once. They want to present the complete set of economic proposals for restructuring to the unions at the same time, and then discuss the social measures that should go with them. That way the painful operation would be dealt with swiftly and the way would be cleared for 1985, when the socialists need to begin regaining popularity before the 1986 elections. However, Pierre Mauroy fears this would be too much for the communist party and the unions to swallow. The prime minister would prefer a slower process with regional as well as national negotiations. To act too quickly might provoke social and political upheaval.

GIVEN the present militancy of the communist party and the increasingly bitter rivalry between the CGT and the CFDT unions, it seems unlikely that the Mitterrand/Fabius strategy could work. All the more since at the heart of the Talbot conflict was the government's tendency to take decisions for the workers without consulting them. Yet there the proposed solution was not that bad: 1,900 redundancies instead of the 2,900 asked for by management, plus a series of measures such as grants and training courses to assist the dismissed workers. The mistake was that it had been designed by well-meaning bureaucrats without any knowledge of the wishes or even the real situation of the workers concerned. Most of them were illiterate Moroccan immigrants for whom training courses were of no use whatever.

In their transition from 'idealism' to 'realism' French socialists have remained true to their statist, technocratic style. Contrary to his predecessor, CERES leader Jean-Pierre Chevènement, Laurent Fabius does not advocate reflation and big investments in the nationalised industries. He praises private enterprise and believes new jobs will come from medium and small companies. He is certainly no less 'dirigiste' than Chevènement or more interested in 'qualitative' issues. But he seems to feel much more at ease with the authoritarian style of the CGT than with the more democratic CFDT. □

THIS ENGLAND

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☐ A substantial human stool was one of the unexpected objects displayed by Mr Peter Addyman, director of York Archaeological Trust, when he addressed the 14th annual Kingston workshop at Surbiton Library Hall. The stool, brought to Surbiton in the form of a coloured film slide, was produced by a Viking conqueror more than 1,000 years ago. – *Surrey Comet* (James Scott)

☐ It was the Marines that made him a Conservative. 'In a work-oriented service such as the RAF you may be more likely to be a Liberal,' he told me, 'but in a hard professional service like the Marines it is natural to be a Conservative. – *Exeter Express and Echo* (Andrew Kirkby)

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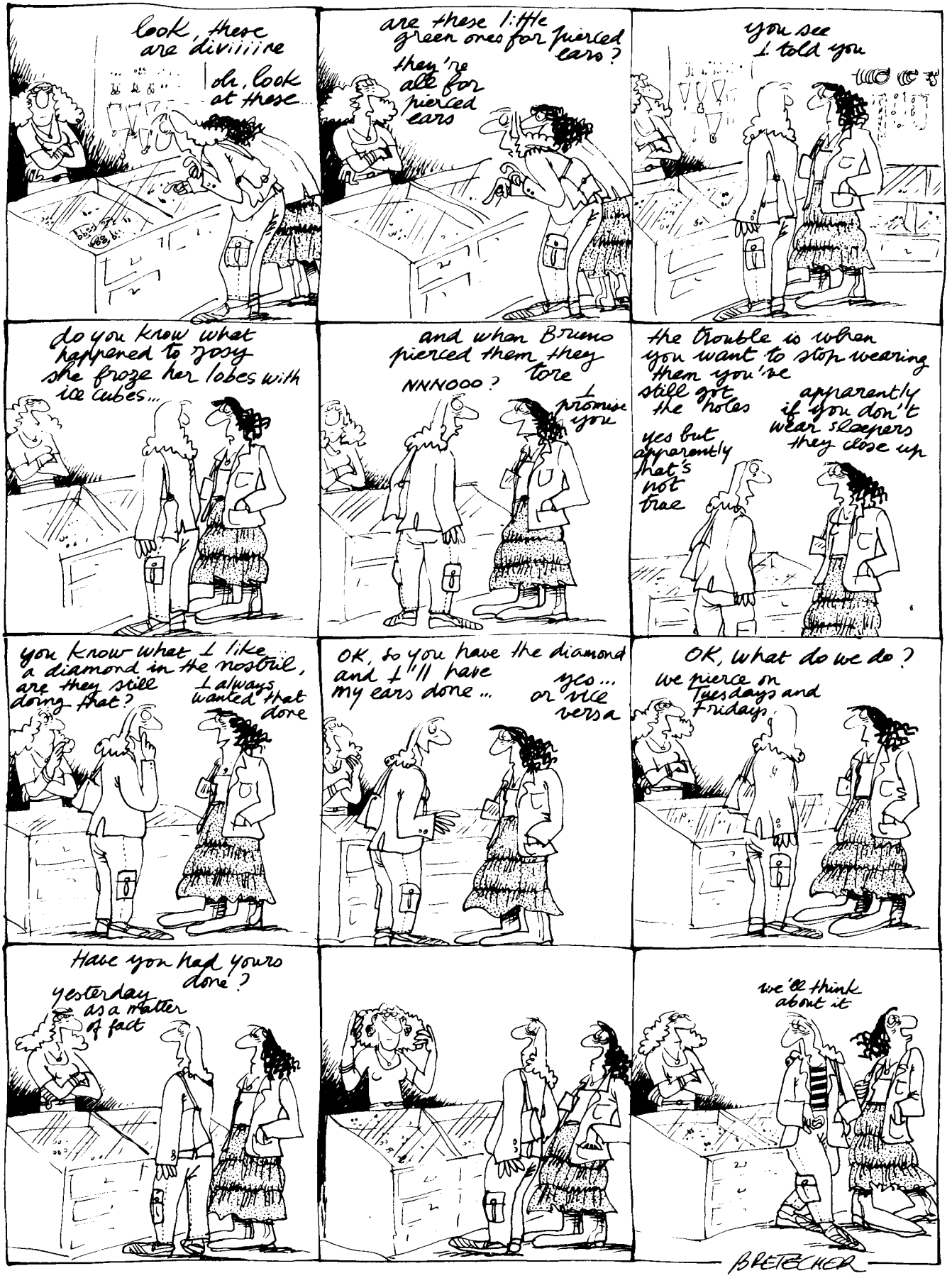
BRETECHER

HAPPY NEW EARS


look, these are diviiiine
oh, look at these...
are these little green ones for pierced ears?
they're all for pierced ears
you see I told you
do you know what happened to Josy she froze her lobes with ice cubes...
and when Bruno pierced them they tore
NNNOOO?
I promise you
the trouble is when you want to stop wearing them you're still got the holes
apparently if you don't wear sleepers they close up
yes but apparently that's not true
you know what I like a diamond in the nostril, are they still doing that?
I always wanted that done
OK, so you have the diamond and I'll have my ears done...
yes... or vice versa
OK, what do we do?
we pierce on Tuesdays and Fridays
Have you had yours done?
yesterday as a matter of fact
we'll think about it
BRETECHER

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LETTERS

Alternatives to the Bomb

Denis MacShane, Geneva, Switzerland

I wish those like Peter Tatchell (Letters 27 January) and others who want to impose Swiss or Swedish military defence systems on Britain would actually come and see what this means.

In Switzerland it means, first, compulsory military service for 20 years. To see weekend trains full of glum citizens going off for military exercises when they could be with family, friends, or out canvassing, is no advertisement for re-introducing conscription in Britain.

Second, Switzerland does not recognise conscientious objection. Each year about 350 people go to prison for refusing military service.

Third, the Swiss have created a military brotherhood of officers stretching into business, politics and all levels of society which makes British freemasonry look like bumbling amateurism.

Fourth, the full involvement of all citizens in military activity does not guarantee democratic, or even half decent behaviour. The last time the Swiss army saw action was in 1932 when it shot dead 12 workers and wounded 60 in a demonstration in Geneva.

Finally, no one here believes that if there was a serious assault on Switzerland by, well, let's say either of the two main European military alliances, that the Swiss army, irrespective of the bravery of its men (by the way military systems of self-defence based on territorial defence are inevitably all male, super-macho affairs), would be able to resist for very long. The plains and cities, where the bulk of the Swiss people, resources and wealth are concentrated, would be quickly occupied while surviving soldiers would retreat to mountain redoubts thence to sweep down and harry the occupying army. We've seen that scenario in action in recent years in a place called Afghanistan.

That Labour needs to re-open its debate on defence is clear. But not please by reintroducing conscription, military hierarchism and teaching young men that to kill can be a noble thing.

Fighting over the flag

Paul Gilroy, London N4

Anthony Barnett's witty observations on patriotism and the Left should be defended against Mark Harrison's fashionable dogma (Letters 3 February). Barnett's critical perspective on Eric Hobsbawm's recent output and on the nationalist fever which currently grips *Marxism Today* and its attendant Bennites, New Realists, etc, is particularly welcome.

We didn't all need the Falklands affair to teach us that nationalism has a key place in Mrs Thatcher's discourse. Black people in this country recognised the distinctive blend of nationalist and racist themes which secures much of her popularity long ago.

At a time when regional and local differences increasingly shape day-to-day experience, the Left can only be damaged by its obsession with a national perspective and nationalist ideology which has so far been nothing more than an equally racist parody of the right-wing version.

My own view is that all the talk about 'free-born Englishmen' confirms Labour's status as a party of the past rather than the future. Perhaps the racists are correct when they emphasise that 'there ain't no black in the Union Jack'.

Hobsbawm, Robbie Grey, Colin Mercer and the rest who would welcome Enoch into their true Brit peace movement and initiate a tug of war with the Right over the flag, have yet to show themselves capable of recognising contemporary racism as a problem worthy of serious political analysis. When they do, maybe blacks will take the Left more seriously.

The common touch

Kate Holden, Huddersfield

Alan Hurst (Letters 3 February) expresses a naive view when he suggests the 'common reader' controls the canon compiled and evaluated by the literary establishment.

It is not the tastes of the 'common reader' that are at issue; neither is it the task of literary studies to predict or dictate what texts will still be read in some distant future. Rather, the debate has to do with the nature of the critical intelligence which attempts to define the object of literary study in the present. This is a fraught area, which jibes about Terry Eagleton's personal ambitions will do nothing to solve.

One example of the necessity of at least reviewing the existing corpus of institutionalised literature: Christina Stead's *The Beauties and the Furies* is a far more wide-ranging, stylish and *difficult* analysis of Europe in the 1930s than Waugh's *Handful of Dust*, but the latter is far more likely to find its way onto undergraduate courses. And, as a bit of a 'common reader' myself, I'd far rather read the former.

TV: love it or leave it alone

Carl Gardner, London N17

After reading Hugo Williams's column (*NS* 3 February), I was so chronically appalled, I had to bombard you. As a former TV critic (of *Time Out* and *City Limits*) I must complain about your magazine's choice of reviewer and the magazine's style of reviewing. Why do you consistently use writers who don't like television as a medium, have no interest in it as an institution, and would quite obviously rather be doing something else?

Is it too much to ask for this society's major form of communication to be treated critically, informedly and committedly by people who know what they're talking about, in what is after all one of our few remaining 'radical' journals? Do you ask people to review books who don't like reading? Would you send a theatre critic to the theatre who hated drama? Of course you wouldn't – then why do you continue with these elitist, snide put-downs of all TV *per se* by frustrated literati who obviously regard everything that's happened since F. R. Leavis as a descent into 'Purgatory'?

Animal rights wronged

Bradford Animal Rights Group, West Bowling, Bradford

In his article (*NS* 13 January), Dave Harrison claimed: 'There has been an upsurge in attendance by racists at animal rights meetings (in Bradford)'.

We are the only animal rights group in Bradford, and certainly no racists have ever attended, or would ever be allowed to attend our meetings.

Animal rights encompasses all animals, including the human species. Therefore a concern for human rights is a prerequisite of a concern for non-human animal rights. Our campaign for stunning prior to religious slaughter arises from compassion towards sentient beings and is but a small part of our campaign.

Pride and prejudice

Peter Dormer, London W13

I am flattered that Jules Lubbock took the time to criticise my article (*NS* 13 and 27 January). What a pity he did not read it properly first. Of course it is difficult to envisage an intellectually satisfying lampshade – that nonsensical idea is his, not mine. The point of my example of the Twyfords lavatory advertisement was not a plea for honest crapping, as he puts it, but to draw attention to the curious fact of a full-colour advertisement depicting a five-year-old girl in a bridesmaid's dress coyly posing on a lavatory seat. Merely one example, among thousands, of the strange advertisements which, if thought about, raise questions about social and political values.

Perhaps Jules Lubbock recognises politics only when they goose step past him. And, while I do not mind Mr Lubbock trying to logic up his own prejudices, I do mind that he deliberately misrepresents my argument, which was not for a tyranny of taste but for its very reverse. There was one caveat: that designers should design styles that people want, and should design well and not cheat. Perhaps if Jules Lubbock stopped wasting his talents on maudlin defences of mockcoal electric fires he might address himself to the problem that on the whole Everyman ends up with a fourth-rate version of everything.

What does emerge from Mr Lubbock's article is that for all his Marxist thrusts and feints he agrees that kitsch is reactionary but thinks it is elitist to say so, which, as far as Everyman is concerned, is very condescending of him.

Wrongly labelled

John Cox, Vice-President, CND

I do not quarrel with the facts reported in your Miscellany column (NS 3 February) showing how

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the Letters section of the *Morning Star* is manipulated to omit or distort criticisms of the Soviet Union and I have to admit to being extremely sore about the treatment I have received. Whereas the right-wing media has attacked me for pro-Soviet bias, my criticism of the Soviet Union's decision to deploy 'equivalent' weapons to cruise and Pershing deployment was misreported by the *Star* and subsequent letters – based on the false report – accused me of anti-Soviet and pro-Heseltine opinions. I soon found that it was easier to counter smears of pro-Soviet bias in the *Guardian* than it is to counter smears of anti-Soviet bias in the *Star*.

But I am not happy with the tone of your report. You note the effects of the editor's unilateral cuts as producing an 'uncharacteristically pro-Soviet letter' from me. The simplistic labels 'pro-Soviet' and 'anti-Soviet' in my view are a barrier to understanding.

In common with all members of the Communist Party and most members of CND, I believe that the primary blame for the arms race rests with NATO, the US and Britain. If we have to label ourselves I would describe CND as 'non-aligned' and the Communist Party as 'critically pro-Soviet' – the two not being contradictory. But labels never do justice to opinions.

Whatever the reasons for the *Star*'s distortion and suppression of my and CND's criticism of the Soviet response to cruise and Pershing deployment, it is important that the issues are argued on their political merits in this new and extremely dangerous situation.

Out of touch?

Josie Edwards, Women's Action Committee, London N20

Barbara Rogers's article on the treatment of women in clubs (*NS* 3 February) left me with a strange feeling of *déja vu*. Reading of clubs that were controlled by a clique of men determined to keep women out of decision-making and full participation in club facilities with lady members . . . subject to such special regulations as the committee may make from time to time; of what could I possibly be reminded? Yes, the Labour party. With its bland, complacent blocking of women candidates in winnable parliamentary seats and council wards, citing the usual excuses that bodies like the clubs your article derides are all too ready to trot out. And of course, changing the rules as it goes along, as with this year's Women's Conference, arbitrarily reduced to one day with the content dictated to delegates.

Barbara actually makes the political connection at one point in her article, drawing out the strong links between the party and these male-dominated clubs. This is particularly clear in the matter of selecting candidates, which she says is often done in the clubs, and therefore frequently in an environment that excludes women.

I agree entirely with the sentiments in her article, but while it would be nice for women to be able to play snooker and drink brown over mild in a free atmosphere, it would be a hell of a lot nicer if women could get access to the biggest labour club of all – the Labour party – and actually have a say in shaping their own lives.

Barbara concludes with the question: Are political activists in touch with the women whose lives are so marked by the clubs? I would add the question: Is the *NS* in touch with the exclusion of women from positions of power in the Labour party? Would it for example, devote 5 columns to the Women's Action Committee – the only (unofficial) party body fighting for reform for women in the party? Or would that be just too close for comfort?

FEEDBACK

Radical politics and the working class

IT WAS GRATIFYING to receive such a response to my piece ('Talking to Ourselves', *NS* 16/23 December). Some of the points and omissions which your correspondents (especially Dave Bradney) mention, are dealt with in my book, so I will not repeat myself here.

There are a couple of things, however, which seem to merit reply:

1. Several people appear to think that I am a guilt-ridden male middle-class academic who either (a) has a starry-eyed view of the 'natural' socialist tendencies of the working class (Oliver Owen) or (b) has, on the contrary, an ignorant elitist contempt of that class and grossly underestimates its radicalism (Suzy Croft).

Clearly I can be guilty on one or other charge, but not on both. In fact – male? Yes, guilty. Middle-class? Yes, by current occupation, but not by origin (my father was a Durham coal miner). Not that I think of this as of any significance one way or the other in this issue. In fact banging on about being Northern working class (*vide* Beatrix Campbell on Orwell) is precisely an aspect of the Left's problem. Nobody who is working-class in origin and occupation advertises it in this way. Chronic self-awareness about class is nearly always a trait of the upwardly mobile (not that there is anything wrong with upward mobility either).

However, and much more importantly, I deliberately avoided all class vocabulary in the piece, because I did not want it to be understood in those terms. Many of Labour's constituency activists are white collar professionals from *both* 'working-class' and 'middle-class' backgrounds and the constituency with which they are out of touch is *both* 'middle-class' and 'working-class' in composition. In fact, if there is a single factor responsible for Labour's ideological isolation, it is not class but education – to be more precise *higher* education, usually in a social science or humanities subject.

Nor do I wish to deny that there are, in many places (including Battersea no doubt), a small minority of genuinely radical working-class people. There always have been (remember *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist*?). But they have also always been highly untypical of the class as a whole and Suzy Croft would have to be a lot more specific about *who* her 'local working-class people, black and white, young and old' were and about *in what* their 'popularity based and radical manifesto' consisted, before she will persuade me to believe otherwise.

2. Oliver Owen's criticism is more serious. Essentially he admits that many Labour constituency parties may be 'unrepresentative' of the communities in which they are situated, but he thinks it doesn't matter. Well, perhaps it wouldn't if such parties could be got to take seriously and treat with respect people who do not subscribe to what Dave Bradney calls the 'unofficial leftie checklist' of 'socialist' values and beliefs. But my argument was that, if you rarely meet and certainly rarely have any close social or personal contact with such people, it becomes more and more difficult to have any existential basis for such seriousness or such respect. Thought of (mainly) abstractly and (mainly) in the mass, Labour voters come to be categorised as either (a) *stupid* – which they very rarely are, or (b) *manipulated* and *misled* – which they may occasionally be, or (c) simply *reactionary* – which they are very rarely, in any total or consistent sense.

The point is, however, that none of these categories does justice to the complex reality of such people, to the highly varied experiences which they undergo in our society and which form their attitudes and values in ways which are very comprehensible once such experiences are understood. These experiences include, among a million others: (a) living in a council house or estate and hassling with council housing departments; (b) sending your children to a school you consider lousy; (c) struggling to pay rates; (d) benefiting from jumping queues in the NHS; (e) suffering from *not* being able to jump queues in the NHS; (f) being out of work since 1980; (g) having constantly rising real wages and lower mortgage payments since 1980. Do I need to go on?

And what I am saying is, yes, of course, Labour activists have long been 'untypical' of Labour voters. But there was a time when all local Labour parties contained people who knew about and had shared such experiences and who thus understood and took cognisance of the values which they generated in their politics, even when they did not share, or only partially shared, those values. And what this means is that those values and the people who possessed them were *real* to Labour activists in a way which they are not now. And because they grasped and respected that reality, older Labour activists understood very clearly that electoral politics is – *has to be* – about more than a litany of desirable political and moral principles.

It was, and it still is, about how you relate such principles to the life experiences of Labour's supporters and potential supporters and to the views and beliefs (often bewilderingly contradictory, because the experiences are often contradictory) which such experiences generate. In short, politics – and especially electoral politics – is a lot more complex and difficult a business than many left Labour activists today believe. It does *not* end, as so many of them seem to think, with the enunciation of some central 'socialist' principles, nor even with the intellectual justification of such principles, no matter how coherent or convincing such justifications may be.

But, unless you share the experiences which make politics more complex (and one may say, more damnably difficult) than this, or unless, at the very least, you meet the people who have such experiences and take what they have to say about them seriously, there is always the likelihood of the easy (and cosy) reduction of politics to a set of shared moral absolutes.

Gavin Kitching

Gavin Kitching is the author of Rethinking Socialism, *published in 1983 by Methuen.*

Feedback contributions on the future of socialism and political parties are welcome but should be no more than 900 words.

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Eva Figes

All that glitters

The Paper Men
WILLIAM GOLDING *Faber* £7.95

There was a time when literary prizes were not taken too seriously in this country. Not even the Nobel, which has ignored fine writers, honoured second-rate ones and always had a political dimension. But British novelists are currently living in a highly competitive atmosphere. We have had promotions recently for the Best of British, the Best of Young British, even for the dozen Best Books of Our Time, a choice so hard to make that the panel ended up with 13 titles, all either obvious or absurd.

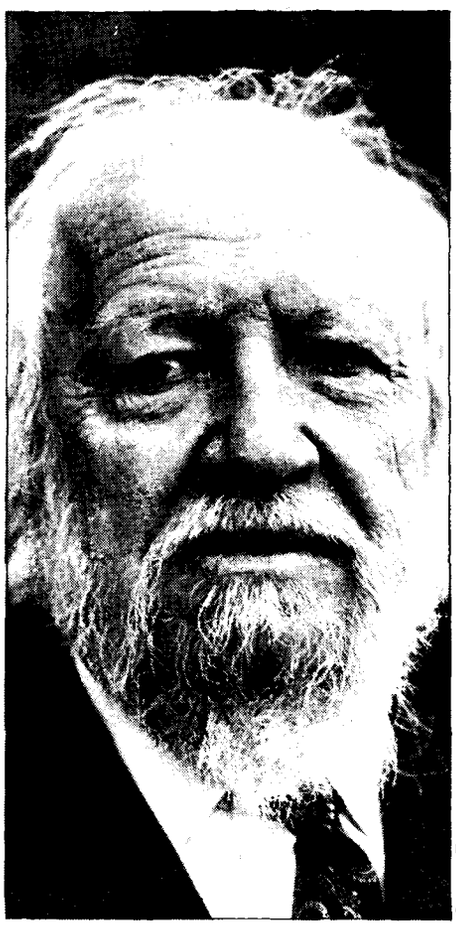
But, above all, this is the Age of the Prize. Everyone knows about the Booker, even if the only book they have heard of is the one kept by Ladbroke's for betting on the result. Critics who should know better have been seized by the competitive spirit. The literary editor of the *Guardian*, assessing publishers' lists recently, thought that this year's crop of novels would provide more of a real competition for the Booker. Fay Weldon, chairman of last year's judges, told the press she was looking for a Booker winner, as though this literary entity had some kind of Platonic pre-existence. By now one almost feels it has.

We need no promotion gimmicks and no juries to tell us that William Golding is the most distinguished novelist of his generation. He hardly needed to make it into Parker's Dozen when *Lord of the Flies* has been a set text for generations of schoolchildren. *Rites of Passage* would have been read without the Booker, and admired. And, as with most novelists with a long track record, some of his books are better than others. No crime in that.

But novelists are living in the Age of the Prize and Golding has just been given the Nobel, which makes him the Prizewinner of Prizewinners, and Golding, in spite of his obvious record, in spite of his enormous sales, has to be hyped like everybody else. His new novel has been rushed into print by Faber and Faber with a speed which is quite astonishing to anyone familiar with the ways of this venerated firm. And, in case the rest of us are in any doubt that we have been resoundingly beaten in the Great Race, the blurb informs us that 'of all British novelists now writing, his work is the most likely to survive'.

In my view it was injudicious of Faber to go overboard in this way. It would have been better to concentrate on the back list and let *The Paper Men* come out rather more quietly in its own good time, for this minor work now comes garlanded with the Nobel Prize much as the Ancient Mariner was saddled with the albatross. *Rites of Passage* was a worthy Booker winner, but *The Paper Men* crumples easily under the weight of the Nobel.

There are signs in the novel itself that Golding is somewhat bothered by his apotheosis as Grand Old Man of English letters, and, in that sense, the book is ironically well timed. Not that the hero and narrator



Camera Press

William Golding: Prizewinner of Prizewinners

Wilfred Barclay is much like his creator except in age, profession and physiognomy; but then one suspects that Golding deliberately made his character as unlike himself as possible, an alter ego who drinks heavily, womanises, roves round Europe in a rootless fashion, treats people abominably and knocks off highly successful novels almost as an afterthought between failed relationships.

Staid, stay-at-home novelists tied to their typewriters are quite fond of creating such hedonistic, driven writers, often with the intention of showing that a true writer's life cannot be like this. Unfortunately this is not Golding's intention, in spite of the title. Given that Wilfred Barclay is supposed to be for real, I for one could not believe in him for a moment. Golding has adopted a wry, jazzy, self-mocking tone which sounds like the pastiche of a novel by someone else, possibly Saul Bellow. It is not funny, as it is presumably intended to be, and the narrator's voice lacks authenticity, the raciness is too often phoney. For instance, we are told that Barclay's daughter had her 'twenty-firster' a long time ago. It must have been, since the expression is quite foreign to me and children have anyhow become of age at 18 for at least a decade. Judicious editing is fast becoming a thing of the past in this country, the more 'distinguished' you get the less anyone bothers with you. Presumably Nobel prizewinners need to hire someone to make sure something they would regret does not slip through.

The kind of narrator Golding has chosen cuts out the possibility of fine writing and this is a big sacrifice to make for such a thin return. But it also raises another problem. The story concerns the interlocking hate relationship between Barclay and his would-be biographer, an American academic called Rick Tucker, who is prepared to go to any lengths to get hold of his 'material', from rifling dustbins to pimping his young wife, a temptation to which Wilf almost succumbs. Given that Barclay must be a bad writer, it seems absurd that anyone should bother to make him the object of academic study. All right, so the joke is that Rick, the third-rate academic in pursuit of a second-rate novelist, is being paid by a dotty and mysterious millionaire rather than a prestigious institution – but who cares, when all is said and done, about two such utterly worthless characters tormenting each other?

I found myself constantly looking for a sub-text in this book. These two men were so paper-thin, so close to each other, the reality through which they moved so tenuous, that I expected them to turn out to be one man. Occasionally the imagery suggests other levels, particularly the constant references to earthquakes, rockfalls and vertigo. We live, we are told, on a rock hurtling through space, and this image is constantly reinforced. Time races, death waits. But the end is a disappointment, since Golding leads the reader firmly back to a literal interpretation. Two men locked in a battle of power, dominance and, above all, humiliation. Familiar Golding themes, but handled in an uncharacteristically trivial fashion.

Every serious writer must be allowed to fail occasionally and certainly every novelist should be allowed an occasional frolic, some lightweight joke of a book which neither writer nor reader need take too seriously. But after Stockholm, this little joke, if joke it is, could backfire, even if it was intended to pre-empt such ultimate honours. At the risk of sticking my neck out, I do not think people of the 21st century will be reading *The Paper Men*. □

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BIOGRAPHY
Ian Black

Harking back

Begin
ERIC SILVER *Weidenfeld* £12.50

The six years Menachem Begin spent as prime minister of Israel were turbulent ones, even by the standards of that turbulent country: a peace treaty was signed with Egypt, the largest and most powerful of its Arab neighbours; Lebanon was invaded twice and the PLO expelled; Iraq's nuclear reactor was bombed; the Golan Heights were annexed and the West Bank dotted with Jewish settlements.

Eric Silver's book is not the first – and nor will it be the last – to chronicle these events. But, as the first full-scale biography of Begin to appear anywhere, it succeeds admirably in explaining his term of office against the necessary background of the 40 years or so he spent waiting to attain supreme power in Zion. This will remain the definitive work for a long time to come.

Those years in the wilderness are crucial to understanding Begin. Until his election victory over a demoralised and discredited Labour Party in May 1977, he was a marginal figure in Israeli politics. Despite a spell in the National Government set up to deal with the crisis that led to the 1967 war, Begin had never shaken off the role of demagogue, extremist and ideologue that had dogged him since his days as leader of the Irgun in the late 1940s. In the West, especially in Britain, he was remembered as the man who ordered the hanging of two British sergeants, blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem and massacred Arabs at Deir Yassin. His was the unacceptable face of Zionism, a world away from the fresh-faced, open-toed, sun-tanned pioneering socialist image that little, beleaguered Israel enjoyed until 1967.

His weapon was his consistency. Begin's Zionism never changed, the enemies of the Jews never wavered. Ernest Bevin, Konrad Adenaeur, Adolf Hitler, Yasser Arafat and others were the same *goyim* in different forms. His rigorous, single-minded view of an unerringly hostile world enabled him – one must assume with all sincerity – to compare the PLO in West Beirut in 1982 to Hitler cowering in a bunker in Berlin in 1945. 'There were times', Silver writes, 'when Begin risked devaluing the horror of the Jewish tragedy, and in the process gave Israel's critics a pretext for breaking the taboo and throwing the imagery of the Final Solution back in his face.'

Begin was mesmerised by the message of Vladimir Jabotinsky, the Revisionist Zionist leader who called for action to create a Jewish State and decried the patient, Fabian methods of the pro-British Chaim Weizmann and the Labour movement under David Ben-Gurion. Jabotinsky died in 1940, but Begin carried on, driven by 'provincial fanaticism and pietistic emotion' that were alien to his grand, secular, cosmopolitan mentor.

After suffering the depredations of life in a Soviet labour camp and wearing down his NKVD interrogator with the same ability for pedantic attrition that was later to exhaust Anwar Sadat and Jimmy Carter, Begin arrived in Palestine in 1943 and, after his release from the Polish army, soon became leader of the Irgun.

Silver's account of Deir Yassin places that event usefully in the context of the combined struggle waged against the British in the late 1940s by the 'Hebrew Resistance Movement' – coordinating the activities of the mainstream Haganah, the Irgun and the smaller Stern Gang. Cooperation between the three was uneasy, mutual suspicion rife, not unlike the experience of the PLO acting as an umbrella for a host of Palestinian groups.

For Begin, the Arabs were always invisible. When 41 Arabs (as well as 28 Englishmen and 17 Jews) died in the King David blast, Irgun Radio announced that it mourned the Jewish victims. Later, he would argue again and again that the Palestinians had 21 sovereign Arab states in which they could live. In his six years in office he met only one West Banker, Mustafa Dudeen, the 'Village Leagues' leader paid by the Israelis to undercut support for the PLO and denounced by his countrymen as a collaborator.

The past, Silver's highly readable biography shows again and again, was always at the forefront of Begin's mind. There were those, like Ezer Weizmann who managed the 1977 election campaign, who understood this and played down the historic record of the Herut party and instead promised strong leadership, responsibility and traditional values.

It worked. Old charges of fascism and demagoguery meant little to a new generation of Israelis who resented the entrenched patronage and condescension of the Labour establishment. The little, bespectacled man with the strident, heavily-accented Hebrew seemed to speak for the children of Moroccan and Iraqi immigrants who wanted something new.

Camp David was Begin's finest hour. But his role in the triangular negotiations was neither heroic nor magnanimous. He haggled and niggled, forcing sterile semantic compromises that betrayed his deep mistrust of both Egypt and America. The peace it produced was a cold one. 'A Premature Prize-Giving' is the title of Silver's chapter on the Nobel ceremony in Oslo in December 1978.

Lebanon, 1982, was Begin's undoing. Not that he wavered in his purpose; but Operation Peace for Galilee, the brainchild of his bullish defence minister, Ariel Sharon, became an all-out war that earned the Jewish state more international opprobrium and created more internal dissent than any previous round with Israel's Arab enemies. The West Bank, his beloved 'Judea and Samaria', saw Jewish terrorists take the law into their own hands. The country became increasingly polarised.

Begin wanted to be remembered as the man 'who set the borders of Eretz Yisrael for all eternity'. It seems an unlikely epitaph unless the inevitable pressures of regional and international politics are simply to be wished away. The Israel Menachem Begin created in his own image, Silver concludes, 'was more narrowly Jewish, more aggressive and more isolated' than ever before. 'The aberrant became the norm.' □

Medbh McGuckian

Valentina

This could be any year, the way the sea
Resorts to me, the countries' animal bays.
The inflated blue of the sky reminds me
Of my first flight, the clumsy blood
reshuffled,
The high spider befriending the bursting
stars.

This window's my companion set, I dip
down
Freaky as a storm to the fondling noises
Plundered from the backs of houses.
The rim of my hood is blown into my
mouth,
Drifting home as heavy as a tulip.

PAPERBACKS
Alan Brien

Time travel

WRITING IN THESE PAGES in 1941, less than a year after E. F. Benson's death at 82, Desmond Shawe-Taylor praised his volumes of biography and reminiscence, but regretted that 'the gaiety of his novels was threadbare' and they did not 'bear re-reading'. Thirty years on, Nancy Mitford, introducing an American omnibus edition of his seven 'Lucia' stories, admitted that she too began re-reading them with misgivings, fearing they had 'worn badly'. Instead, she concluded that these chronicles of the queenly gorgon of East Sussex between the wars, remained 'magic books'. Nevertheless, today, like almost all of his 80 works, they remain out of print and hard to find, prime candidates for paperback revival.

Later this month, however, the newly-revived Hogarth Press is re-issuing, at £3.95 each, two other Benson novels – **Paying Guests** (1929) and **Mrs Ames** (1912) – with, if anything, even more enthusiastic prefaces by Stephen Pile who, with pardonable hyperbole, describes the latter as 'Madame Bovary played for laughs'.

Paying Guests is a lighter, more mechanical farce, cross-purposes in a guest house at

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a country spa, where Benson's characters, as ever, pursue their tiny ruling passions, topped up with self-love and without a trace of self-criticism. But *Mrs Ames* is undoubtedly Benson's masterpiece, a classic of discreetly barbed comedy, its tips daubed with waspish poison, an incredible cross between Wodehouse and Jane Austen, mulched with moral seriousness.

The title figure, his first, best version of Lucia, is a genuine, living creation, never over-indulged or flattered by her author. In her late fifties, and regularly identified as toad-like in looks, she has her snobberies and pretensions, plots and subterfuges, analysed with clinical cruelty. Her dilemmas, unlike those of Lucia, cause her real pain and anxiety. She faces the possibility that her younger husband, the balding, brainless Major with his locks curled carefully over a shiny pate, is falling for the village's ageing golden beauty.

Benson's devious, yet deeply rooted connection with reality here is perhaps best shown by Mrs Ames's feelings about the Suffragettes, the Greenham Common women of their day and, in 1912, a hotly controversial movement. The cause, which she first champions for base reasons then deserts, is pictured by Benson with an insight few male novelists writing pop entertainment could match in 1984:

> Now she was beginning to see that behind the mere events of life, if they were to be worth anything, must lie an idea, and here behind this woman's crusade, with all its hooliganism, its hysteria, its apish fanaticism, lay an idea of justice and sisterhood. They seemed simple words, and she would have said off-hand that she knew what they meant. But as she began faintly to understand them she knew that she had been as ignorant of them as what Australia really was. To her it was a geographical expression only, as justice was an abstract expression. But the meaning of justice was known to those who gave up comforts and amenities of life for its sake, cheerfully suffered ridicule and prison life and misunderstanding. And the fumes of an idea, to one who had practically never tasted one, intoxicated her as new wine mounts to the head of a teetotaler.

Though long a Lucia-buff, I had never heard of Mrs Ames. Now I rate her as one of the key characters in 20th-century English comic fiction, along with Psmith, Apthorpe, Widmerpool or Just William, a faint-hearted feminist of the present, rather than a period type inhabiting the past. Another eccentric survivor, this time from real life, is Lord Berners, previously most widely known under obvious disguise in Nancy Mitford's novels. Born in 1883, his **First Childhood** (Oxford, £2.95) marvellously evokes a *fin de siècle* puberty, full of benighted follies and moated granges, bizarre or just insane neighbours and relatives, a living hell of a prep school. A lonely wilful boy with total recall, he catches and impales them all with deadly understatement and effortless grace.

But even more revealing, in the same covers, is his forgotten novel, **Far From the Madding War,** published in what must have been the most unpropitious year of 1941. Here is a deliberately hermetic portrait, a mere 70 pages, of an Oxford peopled with academic left-overs, who all regard the current unpleasantness with Hitler as little more than a boring inconvenience. A piece of high camp, like lace-making with steel wire, it is now a period curio. I wonder whether his other novel, *The Camel,* described by Harold Acton as 'a Victorian moral tale with macabre undertones' about 'a humped quadruped which appears at an English country vicarage and takes a furious fancy to the Vicar's wife', would also bear re-publishing?

Yet another stranger from the past, also from the Hogarth Press later this month, is Robert Louis Stevenson's **The Amateur Emigrant** (£2.95), a long-forgotten fragment of autobiography recording a voyage in 1870, amid the stink and slop of 'steerage', from Glasgow to New York.

Jonathan Raban, in his introduction, makes a brave case for this being Stevenson's best book, a Dostoievskian journey into his own interior while fighting the disintegration of his identity, as well as a vivid documentary. But without denying the value of the testament and its excitement as a good read, I felt the better I knew him the less I liked him.

He half-understands that the workers of Britain have suffered a crushing defeat – 'I had heard vaguely of whole streets of houses standing deserted by the Tyne, of homeless men loitering at the street corners of Glasgow . . . of closed factories, useless strikes and starving girls.' But he laughs at their idea that what is wrong is the system of government and that 'the cure for all evils was, in consequence, a revolution'. He regards them as 'politically blind', putting forward his own explanation that it is all 'a question of money' which will be solved by the nostrum of all wet liberals – 'that people should grow wiser and better'.

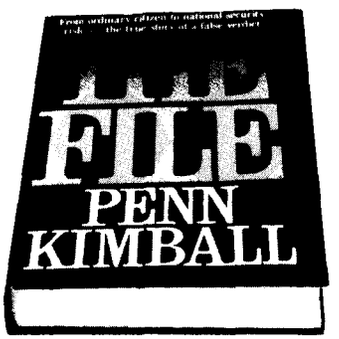
Another time-trip, with easily de-coded messages for today, is John Skinner's **Journal of a Somerset Rector, 1803-1834** (Oxford, £3.95), first published in 1930, and edited by Howard and Peter Coombs, descendants of the publican in Skinner's village who appears frequently in his pages. Virginia Woolf, in an essay reprinted as a foreword, calls it 'a diary of despair', and his daily jottings are riddled with tales of disaster and disease, exploitation and injustice, poverty and misery. It is difficult not to sympathise, as she does, with his vain attempts to give succour and stem the tide, but I could not help also seeing that he too was part of the machinery of oppression. In the end, my admiration went rather to the miners and labourers who, despite threats of punishment by the magistrates below and the God above, went on cursing, drinking, rebelling, blaspheming and carousing, opposing in their own way, rather than the parson's.

Another view of the age-old struggle to change the world, and overlapping in time, is to be found in another Oxford paperback, due out later this month, Samuel Bamford's **Passages in the Life of a Radical** (£3.95). It might have provided an even closer parallel if the publishers had included Bamford's account of his youth in the country, *Early Days*. Still, *Life of a Radical,* covering the years from 1816 to 1821, is a stirring account of how the people fought back against the spies, police, armed troops and government tyranny, as Waterloo was replaced by Peterloo as the ruling classes' famous victory over its enemies.

The centre-piece is Bamford's noted first-hand description of that massacre outside Manchester of peaceful protesters by the mounted gentry, sabre in hand, but there is much more to savour as he walks all the way south to his trial. Bamford chickened out in the end, becoming a special constable to put down the Chartists in 1848, but it is hard to blame him. For being a victim of Peterloo, he was charged with treason when the penalty was still to be hanged, drawn and quartered, and he was several times imprisoned, even if in, to us, surprisingly comfy condition, with food sent in and his wife sharing his bed. □

THE FILE PENN KIMBALL

As the Campaign for Freedom of Information Act gathers momentum in Britain, nobody should miss the story of retired American journalist Penn Kimball, who discovered that his life had been blighted by an FBI file he never knew existed. For over 30 years he had been secretly labelled as a subversive, and those he had regarded as close friends and colleagues had consistently informed on him to the authorities.



This book is about Kimball's attempts to clear his name. It describes an individual's struggle with a bureaucracy, and it reads a thriller. The important difference is that *The File is all true.*

Hardback £12.50

George Allen & Unwin

OUT NOW!

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World Human Rights Guide

ed. CHARLES HUMANA
Hutchinson £9.95 & £5.95

International comparisons may be invidious. They are also unavoidable. This handbook meets a glaring need. It supplies the data, in digestible form, to make informed comparisons between the world's major states on their performance in the field of human rights. Each state scores points (from 0 to 2) for its attention to 40 basic rights. These rights range from peaceful political opposition via civil marriage and the presumption of innocence to independent trade unionism. Total scores are turned into percentages.

Finland (despite self-censorship) and New Zealand head the list at 96%. Britain does pretty well (95%), picking up points for a volunteer army and losing them on Ulster. At the other end, Ethiopia scores 17%, well below the Soviet Union (27%) and South Africa (30%). Senegal, by these standards, is easily the best performer in Africa (an impressive 89%). Average performance is 64%, higher than the author expected, largely because technological backwardness and inefficiency act as breaks on the totalitarian inclinations of Third World despots.

The scope of reference is remarkable. Realistically, the author takes into account executive enforcement as well as legislative decrees. The survey is comprehensive. It is also genuinely objective. Western democracies on the whole score well, but Communist states are given due credit for their easy-going attitudes to sexual freedom, and accompanying figures on life expectations and income per capita allow correlations to be made, in the case of the Third World, between economic conditions and action on human rights. Classic liberal criteria determine the choice of questions. Economic (what Berlin calls 'positive') freedoms have been omitted. The Left may favour the right to work and the Right may prefer the right to property, but neither figures in the analysis. All the same, this handbook deserves a place on every libertarian's bookshelf.

Robert Silver

Alain Robbe-Grillet

JOHN FLETCHER *Methuen* £1.95

Graham Greene

JOHN SPURLING *Methuen* £1.95

Given that a characteristic of Methuen's Contemporary Writers series has been that the more 'postmodern' a subject's reputation, the more academic (in the pejorative sense) the critical approach adopted, one takes up John Fletcher's study of Robbe-Grillet with some apprehension. Unnecessarily. It proves to be admirably straightforward and lucid: virtues shared, more predictably, by John Spurling's study of Greene. Both, too, display a welcome hard-headedness. Among other things, each booklet in the series makes a case for the contemporary significance of its subject. Consequently, adverse criticism tends to be in short supply. As both Greene and Robbe-Grillet are out-of-fashion writers – in Britain, anyway – long past their artistic prime, a surfeit of redressive plaudits might have been expected. Instead, the volumes are remarkable for their moderation.

Just three of Robbe-Grillet's novels – *The Voyeur*, *Jealousy* and *In the Labyrinth* – receive Fletcher's unstinting praise. Indeed, he practically dismisses all the writer's work since *The House of Assignation*, finding distasteful its sadoerotic preoccupations. Despite the 'declining spiral' of Robbe-Grillet's achievement, though, Fletcher ends by claiming that he will again be a considerable figure in modern literature. For Spurling only *The Heart of the Matter*, *The Power and the Glory*, *The Quiet American*, and *The Comedians* belong to the first rank. The size of Greene's oeuvre has obliged Spurling to employ a thematic, rather than work-by-work, approach, but he has largely avoided the incompleteness this usually entails by analysing Greene's 'patterns of mind', emphasising the importance of his childhood and adolescent experience, and examining how these patterns are differently manifested in the various phases of Greene's career.

All booklets like these can be reasonably asked to do is provide reliable introductions. In exceeding that requirement, Fletcher and Spurling join Blake Morrison on Heaney and Andrew Motion on Larkin as the pick of the series so far.

David Montrose

The Football World: A Contemporary Social History

STEPHEN WAGG *Harvester* £15.95 & £5.95

Football enthusiasts tend to have a healthy, or unhealthy, appetite for discourse about the game. Stephen Wagg's study – scholarly, literate, its general theses nicely illustrated with anecdotal instances – should satisfy the perhaps more demanding tastes of the socially and politically aware fan: our man (woman?) on the terraces, with the CND badge (quite a few of these nowadays, I'm glad to say) and the *New Statesman* in his or her pocket. Football deserves and repays the scrutiny of social scientists, for it preeminently partakes of wider cultural traditions.

These traditions provoke unease; it's hard to weigh their positive qualities of heady emotional solidarity and local pride against the professional game's strictly masculine ethos, its undemocratic structures, its integration into a consumerist model of 'entertainment'. After sketching the game's origins and history, and before examining modern managers and spectators, Wagg pays particularly sharp attention to this last theme, summing up his implicit lament when he characterises Kevin Keegan as 'English football's first clone – a persona consciously fashioned with a huge audience of consumers in mind'.

I can't help regretting, however, that Wagg's own emphases succumb too readily to fashionable definitions of players as get-rich-quick advert-fodder and fans as 'hooligans' (or, in the witless 'radical' version of the LSE situationists of 1968, 'the most militant group within the British working class'). Had he spent more time among the lower divisions, looking at some less extrovert supporters and less limelit players, he might have produced an even better book and would have conveyed a fuller sense of the contradictory values which still coexist within the football world.

M. H. Ryle

Sex and Love: New Thoughts on Old Contradictions

ed. SUE CARTLEDGE and JOANNA RYAN
Women's Press £4.95

Sex and Love reflects the diverse sexual politics and practices of current feminism. It also marks the considerable development of feminist theory that has taken place in the last decade. Sensing a resurgence of interest (after a late Sixties lapse) in issues of sex and love, the editors set out to compile writings from the women's movement. They found little to reflect 'the wealth of ideas and activities we were aware of through conversation and more formal discussion'. So they commissioned. The result is 13 pieces on diverse aspects of heterosexual, lesbian and bi-sexual experience; sex and motherhood; being alone; falling in love. Some are theoretical, others purely autobiographical. The best mix the two.

Main 'themes' can be pulled out: a rejection of the power relations that heterosexuality reflects and cements; the importance of women exploring and asserting their own sexual desires, and a recognition of the wider forces that shape our sexual identity – material, ideological and unconscious.

Lynn Segal takes up these last two themes in the deliciously named 'Sensual Uncertainty, or Why the Clitoris Is Not Enough'. She lambasts both empirical sexologists (Kinsey, Masters and Johnson) and newer feminist 'manuals' for their limited view of the route to female sexual pleasure. Concentrating too much on the physical, on modifying women's sexual behaviour, they don't take into account the psychological and social forces which affect a woman's sexuality.

Nearly all the pieces are explicitly critical of heterosexuality – even those (*especially* those) written by heterosexual women. But writing this I am aware of the chasm that divides feminist awareness of the coercive, ritualised nature of heterosexuality for so many women and the assumpions and beliefs of the 'outside' world. In that sense the book is preaching to the converted.

Melissa Benn

Donald Davie and the Responsibilities of Literature

ed. GEORGE DEKKER *Carcanet* £9.95

Donald Davie – poet, critic, teacher, autobiographer and good man – merits the shrewd appraisals in this book. Hugh Kenner (who argues that the orthodoxies of literary criticism have now replaced theology 'as the domain of earnest cultural contention') positively judges Davie 'a good minor poet'. Bernard Bergonzi calls Davie 'the finest critic of poetry of his generation'. Davie's ideas and style are rooted in the English Dissenting tradition and in the pure diction of the late Augustan age. But his catholic interests range, as these essays show, from the sculptured words and articulate energy of the American Pound to a long liaison with the Russian Pasternak, whose lines are echoed and regenerated in Davie's own work; from the voice and idiom of the Irish Austin Clarke to the English Poundian Basil Bunting.

Two of the weaker essays fail to convince. Robert von Hallberg claims that Davie 'shares the liberal presuppositions of his generation, and his rightism develops largely from a lack of faith in this audience'. But this seems like special pleading, for his 'strident attacks on libertine and liberal tendencies' suggest that Davie belongs in the reactionary camp with Amis and Larkin. Dana Gioia argues that Davie's major work, *The Shires*, which the critics disliked, is 'a long, epic-autobiographical poem in the Poundian manner'. But this generic definition does not necessarily make it a good poem.

Harvey Oxenhorn's chapter is a stimulating apologia for teaching poetry-writing at the graduate level – despite Davie's wry contention that 'the amount of actual poetic talent in any generation cannot possibly support or justify workshops on the present scale'. He uses Davie's formal example (curbing 'the five-lane free-verse highways') to demonstrate the way verse should be taught. This volume ends appropriately with a poem by Davie's friend Charles Tomlinson who addresses him, as Coleridge once addressed Wordsworth: 'Teacher and friend, what you restored to me/Was love of learning.'

Jeffrey Meyers

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FICTION
Grace Ingoldby

Old scores

A Gathering of Old Men
ERNEST J. GAINES *Heinemann* £8.95
A Curious Street
DESMOND HOGAN *Hamish Hamilton* £8.95
The Colonel's Daughter
ROSE TREMAIN *Hamish Hamilton* £8.95
Firebird 3
ed. ROBIN ROBERTSON *Penguin* £3.50

For anyone who finds irresistible the long shadow of the American deep south – Scarlett munching the carrot and dedicating herself to Tara; McCullers and William Faulkner; the knot of Southern past – Ernest J. Gaines, who sets his **A Gathering of Old Men** in contemporary, backwoods Louisiana, is your man.

In Baton Rouge, Salt and Pepper, one white, one black, prepare for the big football game against Missouri. Local heroes, their famous partnership is threatened by the long arm of the segregated past when Salt's brother Beau, a Cajun farmer, is shot dead on the old Marshall Plantation back home. Candy, a white girl brought up by coloureds and now mistress of Marshall, faces up to this dilemma – a black man with a gun, a white man dead in her yard – by admitting guilt herself and rounding up all those who have, or had, any grudge against the Boutan family: against Fix, old man Boutan, a Godfather figure with some very heavy mates. The present is fine for Salt and Pepper, but out at Marshall old resentments, on both sides, linger long and hard.

Thus, when Mapes (the sheriff with concrete eyes) turns up to investigate he is met by a wall of resistance: beyond Beau's body, a shuffle of old black men in their 80s, most who couldn't hit a barn door standing next to it, line the garry porch armed with ancient shotguns, each one claiming responsibility, each one claiming he 'kilt' Beau. With not much left to lose, they stand united and are prepared to fall when night comes – bringing with it Fix's heavies who will take the law away from Mapes and settle it as they used to do, themselves. The old men are sadder than they are ridiculous and the pace of the novel, appropriately hobble-and-plod, gives them time to explain themselves. As the sun sinks down, the story steadily unfolds to its unexpected climax. Concerned with old men, old scores, it is remarkably balanced, warm and loving; place is as potent as it can be, the atmosphere crackles, the gathering is as astonishing as it is deadly serious.

As with the sweaters in TV ads, so fluffed by rinse-aids that they can scarcely be shoved into those louvred drawers, any attempt to compress the messages, insights, blind alleys or about turns of Desmond Hogan's highly original **A Curious Street** probably does more harm than good. Jeremy Hitchins, son of an Irish mother, an English father, struggles forward and back again, in England and Ireland, past and present, in an attempt to come to terms with himself, with history, with Ireland and with his obsession with Alan Mulvenny, one-time would-be lover of his mother. Hogan meets the challenge of what is a tall order in anyone's book by bravely taking the risk of making these efforts towards realisation of self, understanding of and commentary on Ireland today, as complicated and as circuitous as they really are. His progress along the street, ghosts beckoning from every alley, is one step forward, two steps back, with only the energy and urgency of Hitchins's quest holding the narrative together. This is a trailing, poetic and enigmatic book, an exacting read which perfectly expresses the dilemma it describes.

Rose Tremain goes from strength to strength, more versatile than an egg and a lot more interesting. **The Colonel's Daughter,** her first collection of stories, is a winner – provoking the unusual response of actually wishing it would go on and on. To choose from treasures, there is the unexpectedly violent ripple produced when the Colonel's daughter herself ransacks the family pile, whilst the folks are enjoying a 'heavenly hols'. This moves like a thriller, flipping from one angle to the other and showing clearly Tremain's meticulous attention to detail, as well as the understanding of a varied cast of characters that makes her such a riveting and satisfying read. 'Autumn in Florida' deals with dignity diminished, when Beryl and George get a taste of all-American fun on the holiday of a lifetime at the Palmetto Village Complex. George loses his golf clubs; Beryl's stomach is upset; both are vigorously insulted but come through. The funniest perhaps is 'My love affair with James I', the tale of what befalls the sweetie, Steve, when he is cast (despite baggy eyes and Neanderthal thighs) to play Buckingham opposite the big star Will – who 'crawled onto a stage bent double from his deprived childhood in a Welsh mine, straightened up to do a memorable Hamlet aged twenty' and, though rather diminished by drink, is still an attractive proposition. Steve re-lives the making of the movie, having returned to a life doing lucrative voice-overs for 'Tiggo' catfood – 'My voice is my greatest asset . . . it is redolent with depth . . . it reverbs' – and watering the cucumbers on his roof garden.

Firebird 3, an anthology of works by starters and puddings, sonorously tagged 'what is most serious in new fiction', is more fun than it sounds – including extracts from new novels by Julia O'Faolain and Richard Thornleigh; stories by Bernard MacLaverty and Marina Warner; new poems from Michael Hoffman. A hotch-potch of styles and situations that would delight Wullie, a character created by the previously unpublished Alex Hamilton, who surveys clothes/class as follows: 'Ah mean denim zan polo-necks while yiz kin, kiz soon yizur gonnae be earnin that much munni yizull no be able tae afford tae go aboot like fuckin tramp sur midgie men'. □

World Labour Report
Volume 1
A mass of relevant information has been sifted in preparing this volume in order to provide a quick and reliable means of understanding the complex realities of the social and labour scene in the world. Specialised studies give the most significant elements in order to produce an objective survey of social and labour questions in which the salient facts and most perceptive commentaries are presented. This volume covers the employment problem, trends and problems of income and wages; social security in industrialised countries; and the impact of technology on employment, working conditions and industrial relations.
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ISBN 92-2-103628-6 £5.70

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Tel. 01-828 6401

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TEEN MAGAZINES
Mary Harron

Trading places?

The most radical girls' magazine ever published in Britain happened over 30 years ago, probably by accident. I'm referring to the first issues of *Girl*, which I remember in its later incarnation as a jolly weekly paper with pop pin-ups, recipes and articles on how to make decorative cushions. Look back to the first issue in 1951, however, and you get a surprise. On the cover is an adventure strip, 'Kitty Hawk and Her All-Girl Air Crew', showing Kitty – a handsome blonde with a Battle of Britain profile – at the controls of her plane, executing daredevil manoeuvres in the air. Turn the pages and you find that, while Kitty and her crew are off thwarting kidnappers in Tunis, Penny Wise Private Detective is rescuing her older brother, Judy and Pat are solving a school mystery and Candy (of 'The Adventures of Candy Maitland') is trapping kidnappers in Cornwall. No recipes, no fashion, no boys.

Girl in 1951 saw the world as female: an enormous girls' boarding school in which spirited heroines rescued ballerinas and favourite teachers from the hands of rough, beastly men. It respected duty, honour and class divisions; and in the midst of this world of clear certainties is a pin-up of the Head Girl herself, Princess Elizabeth, smiling rigidly out of a nest of white satin. For all its innocent snobberies, *Girl* offered a vision of female action and adventure that hasn't been repeated since.

In one sense *Girl* then was a hangover from women's wartime independence when they were drafted into the workplace and into uniform. But what looks like an early feminist spirit is more likely due to the magazine's particular origin. *Girl* was launched by a male editor, Marcus Morris, as a sister paper to the *Eagle* and evidently he simply took the standard characters in boys' stories and changed them to girls. By 1952 the concept had been re-worked. *Girl* was not to be a female translation of a boys' paper but a junior edition of a woman's magazine – with fashion, cooking and a problem page – and that is what girls' papers have been ever since.

This is not to condemn them. They are still a specifically female preserve, with a forum for personal and emotional problems. The magazine market for teenage boys and men on the other hand, is very large but entirely divided into special interests, from Kung Fu to cars to model railways to computers. Women may be oppressed, but they have a better sense of themselves than men, and some of the credit should go to those much despised magazines.

Magazines are prisoners of their format and in recent years the girls' papers, with their emphasis on wholesomeness and understated make-up, have had trouble in adapting to youth culture since punk. The increased sexual knowingness, the bizarre new styles in hair and make-up, the new androgynous pop stars and a certain shift in male-female relationships has simply passed them by – with the partial exception of a new arrival, *Just Seventeen*, which offers more sophistication, balancing spiked hair with a nice girl image and a traditional format.

But what about the boys? A few days ago, a large format teenage paper called *Boy Zone* caught my eye, and my first thought was that it was a junior edition of a gay magazine. Later I realised that the cover of *Boy Zone* was just like a male version of *Jackie*, showing two winsome twin brothers in dungarees, coyly pretending to paint a wall. Inside are a lot of rather chi-chi fashion spreads, mixed with gossip, interviews and pop news. Something about it was reminiscent of the 1970s style-and-gossip magazine *Frizz*, and it was no surprise to find that the same editor, Bari Bacco, was responsible for both.

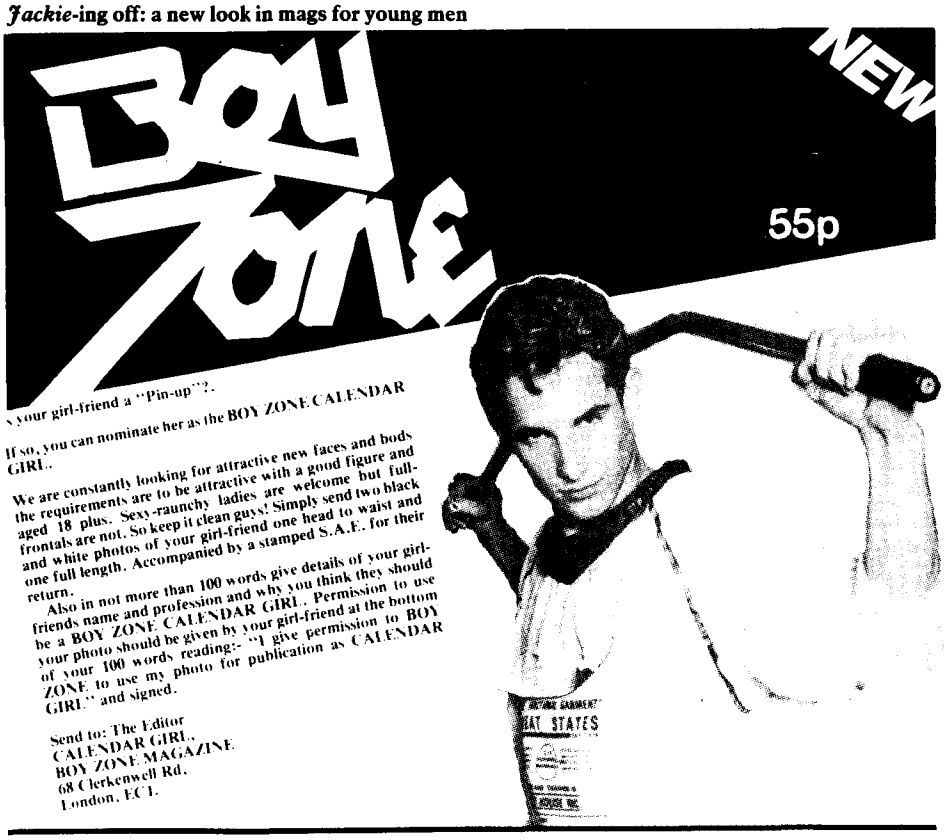
Bacco says that *Boy Zone* is a 'fashion and lifestyle magazine' aimed at an audience between 17 and the late 20s: 'young men without mortgages, who like football and have a car and the money to go to clubs.' The idea was to take advantage of the current boom in male fashion. However, as Britain has no men's fashion magazines (unlike America or Europe), *Boy Zone* is automatically placing itself within a traditionally female territory and, hence, in a mine-field of male sexual uncertainty. It just can't catch the right tone and veers between the epicene and a crude back-slapping machismo: there is a quite offensive page three girl ('a pin-up for your locker') and some nudge-nudge references to 'chicks' and girlfriends.

Boy Zone isn't a very good magazine on any terms, but I feel I ought to approve of it more than I do. After all, this kind of role reversal is exactly what I so admire in those early issues of *Girl*. But I find it . . . creepy. No doubt it's down to social conditioning; I find pouting male models unpleasantly narcissistic, but I don't mind the same poses in women.

However, I can't get enthusiastic any more about men liberating themselves through style. I'm beginning to feel quite sullen about this incursion into female territory; the same way I feel about those 'men's groups' where men learn to explore their sensitivity. Men still run everything. Do they have to take hold of fashion and glamour and sensitivity too? But they have, in the pop world at least. The most glamorous, dressed-up stars are now men – e.g. Marilyn and Boy George – and how many women are in the charts? Sometimes I wish boys had stuck with model trains.

But, in the end, what is most interesting is not how similar *Boy Zone* is to a girls' paper, but how different. *Boy Zone* has no problem page, no fiction, no articles on physical and emotional dilemmas; it would be far easier for them to run an article on make-up or dresses for men than an agony column. Men's magazines still look outward, women's look inwards. Or, to put it crudely, men want to compete; women want to be liked. It's still a long way from trading places after all. □

***Jackie*-ing off: a new look in mags for young men**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MUSIC
Andrew Clements

Odd couple

Ravel/Varèse Festival
South Bank/Radio 3

Hardly had the London Sinfonietta's massive three-part celebration of Stravinsky rounded itself off last year than plans were announced for yet another festival, combining the music of Ravel and Varèse. This time the Royal Opera House and the BBC joined forces with the Sinfonietta; the double bill at Covent Garden last September of *The Nightingale* and *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* provided a handy coda to the Stravinsky series and the opening to its successor. But the main thrust of Ravel/Varèse has been concentrated into the last six weeks, spread between the South Bank and the Opera House. What began with one Ravel opera closed with the other, *L'Heure espagnole*, last Friday in the Festival Hall.

Ever since the magnificent Schoenberg and Gerhard series in 1972 revolutionised the way in which 20th-century music could be packaged and presented, the Sinfonietta has made such a success of its festivals it seems almost churlish to voice misgivings about the ultimate wisdom and value of this latest one. Without the survey of Webern and Schubert, the Kurt Weill programmes and, of course, the Stravinsky cycle, London musical life would have been incomparably more impoverished over the last ten years. I'm not at all sure the same could be said of these concerts.

There are certainly fascinating comparisons to be essayed between Ravel and Varèse: their creative careers substantially overlapped; ultimately they drew their influences from a common stylistic pool. In their mature music, however, their aesthetics could hardly be less congruent and, though contrast is a necessary element in any programme building, the bald juxtapositions of the two composers in some of the Sinfonietta concerts was surely not entirely constructive. The frisson of being plunged from the cosy world of Ravel's *Cinq chansons populaires* straight into the *blocs sonores* of Varèse's *Poème electronique* and the primitivism of *Ionisation* in the Elizabeth Hall ten days ago told us little about either composer. Elsewhere there were some enlightening cocktails, like Varèse's *Amériques* between *Boléro* and *La Valse*. But more often the two components seemed hermetically sealed, with Ravel's substantially greater output necessarily receiving more attention.

Had all the performances been equally accomplished, such problems of balance would have solved themselves. But, whereas Varèse was invariably well served, Ravel fared indifferently. David Atherton conducted all the concerts that required a conductor, and with both the Sinfonietta and the BBC Symphony Orchestra he established first-class ensemble and sharp-edged textures, the prerequisites of the Varèsian sound world. A more overwhelming account of *Arcana* would be difficult to imagine, or an *Intégrales* more muscular or physically involving. It is the rawness of such scores that Atherton responds to most naturally; he is an instinctive modernist. Ravel requires something altogether less straightforward, a feeling for line and colour, an effortless sense of shape. Where Atherton tried to impose an interpretation on a score (*Daphnis et Chloé*, for example) he mistook caution for sensitivity, selecting slow tempi and dour phrasing, starving the music of the light and air which sustains it. Ravel without inner life is a dull composer indeed.

The substantial body of Ravel's piano music was entrusted for the festival to Paul Crossley, in a recital at Covent Garden and in the two concertos with Atherton and the BBC Symphony (for the left-hand concerto) and the Sinfonietta (for the G major). I missed the solo recital but in the concertos he gave highly articulate but ultimately only partial accounts, fussy where the G major should be naturally unfolded, over-civilised in the darkly barbaric sections of the left-hand work. The most rewarding Ravel playing came from members of the Sinfonietta left to their own best instincts: Nona Liddell and Christopher van Kampen nicely abrasive in the Sonata for violin and cello, Felicity Palmer unaffected in the *Chants populaires*, Ann Murray in the Mallarmé songs. Here at last were performances that showed an awareness of the tradition of Ravel interpretation.

Ultimately it is the strength and continuity of that tradition which tells against the usefulness of the Sinfonietta festival. While there is always room for great Varèse playing and for more chances to hear those unsettling masterpieces, Ravel has no need of special pleading; occasional pieces and juvenilia aside, his works get regular airings. □

TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

Sin-eating

WITH CIVIL war returned to Beirut – was it ever away? – the Everyman film **Warlords and Widows: The Maronites of Lebanon** (BBC-1) had a tragic topicality. But then the Lebanon has tragedy written into its constitution: the President must always be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Suni Muslim. 'What ruined our country,' said President Gemayel's father, 'was that Christians and Muslims became religious fanatics and their national pride died out.' The trouble may not have been started by our dear Ayatollah, but it happens his Shiite Muslims are the fastest growing sect in the country and the success of his revolution in Iran eggs them to more and more militancy. The Christian militias are illegal, but without them whole communities would have been wiped out by the Ayatollah's long arm.

Since the Crusades, the Maronites have fought the Christian fight against militant Islam. They are the traditional ruling class of Lebanon, now embattled, frightened and resentful of Western Christianity 'that does nothing to help'. The government hasn't dared take a census since 1936 for fear it showed too big a Muslim majority and undermined the delicate balance of power, now so utterly gone. Jocelynne Khoueiry is commander of a female militia and a Catholic theology student. How did she reconcile Christianity with killing? 'They complement one another,' she pouted. 'Jesus said turn the other cheek but he used violence to turn the moneylenders out of the temple. It is our temple in the Lebanon that is threatened now.' But didn't Muslims worship the same God? 'They are blessed, yes, but I cannot say they have the grace of God like we do. God said, "he who is not with us is against us".' The film began with a communion performed by men in biblical hats to a background of Arab singing. It ended with the same music, as straddle-legged female theology students opened fire with machine guns.

Subjects discussed on **Timewatch** (BBC-2) included the Nazi Admiral Dönitz and Czar Peter the Great, but the most fascinating item concerned the mediaeval 'Cult of the Dead' which prevailed before the Reformation (and no doubt in the Lebanon still). In those days you could speak directly to the dead on the telephone of prayer. They were just individuals living in the past and their coffins were a kind of clothing to mask a confusing decomposition. Most importantly, their passage through purgatory could be helped along by the purchase of endless masses (those awful telephone bills!), so the rich had an easier time of it after death, as before. The practice of sin-eating, for instance, involved paying madmen or social outcasts (the poor?) to eat food which had been left overnight on the coffin of the deceased to draw out his sins. Surely the origin of our consumer society?

After the Reformation, prayers were no longer addressed to the dead, who were, after all, dead, and the only food at funerals was for the mourners. The film showed this transformation of attitude in the effigies on tombstones. From lying prone, sealed for ever in their own dead prayers, the statues began to prop themselves on their elbows, rise to their knees and finally to stand up, triumphing over death not by meditating on it but ignoring it. The attitude persists to this day, when, as the commentator poetically put it, 'Most people fight shy of death altogether.'

I wonder, will Ian Watson (20/20 Vision's **Every Mother's Son** C4) ever make it out of care and the British Movement, where glue-sniffing and skin-headedness have landed him? Ian was one of those demon children who bring out the best and the worst in us. He cried from birth until two non-stop. At five, he was the youngest-ever truant. By ten

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he was uncontrollable, attacking teachers, dossing with tramps, carving up his home. When he started taking pot-shots at other children, he was 'suspended'. 'Ian's main trouble was that he thought he had no friends,' said his brave mother. But Ian may have had a point. When he took up glue, they had to junk two carpets and renew the plaster and floorboards where he peed. 'There were sperm stains all over the walls of his room,' said his astonished father. 'Even on the ceiling.' One day Ian came home with a swastika tattoo and said, 'I'm a member of the British Movement now.'

The film toured Carnaby St to fill in the glue-soaked background: 'If you laid a Pakki out you wouldn't remember it,' was the way one pinhead with a spider's web tattooed over his face described the pleasure of this drug. (I thought it was unwise of Colin Morris on his afternoon **My Life** programme (ITV) to ask his gluey interviewee exactly how you go about the stuff.) Said Ian's 'Key' worker: 'We try to instil into the boys that they've to suffer the consequences of their actions.' As if they weren't already?

The Heart of the Dragon (C4) has made a worthy start with its anti-Mao intro and now a rather prim section on 'caring', which the Chinese seem to have a monopoly on. I'm sure Ian would never have been allowed to get at the glue if he'd been born in China. The maddest person they could come up with in their genial asylum sequence was about equal to your average American citizen, and not unlike one. Encouraged to be crazy for the cameras, he spouted his 'Four Modernisations' theory. These were, CLOTHES WOOLLENIZED, TRANSPORT LIMOUSINE-IZED, MEALS BANQUETIZED and BUILDINGS PAGODA-IZED. It seemed a familiar enough platform, and better than many. □

THEATRE
Rosalind Carne

Case study

The Biko Inquest
JON BLAIR and NORMAN FENTON
Riverside Studios
The White Devil
JOHN WEBSTER *Greenwich*
Loving Women
PAM GEMS *Arts Theatre*

Albert Finney: 'A man with brain injury was left lying on a mat in chains for 24 hours.' Nigel Davenport: 'We had good reason to believe he was shamming.'

It would be hard to improve on the dialogue of the actual inquest, dramatised here, from transcripts, by Jon Blair and Norman Fenton. Albert Finney directs and plays Kentridge, attorney for the Biko family, and his weighty presence and incisive interrogation are brilliantly set against the cold assurance of white South African supremacy, personified in Davenport's Colonel Goosen, Head of Security Police, or in any one of the succession of authority figures who step into the witness box.

A courtroom staffed with actors like this could hardly fail to engage our attention: the cast includes Michael Gough, Edward Hardwicke and Richard Johnson. And this case deserves to be heard again. Because it is documentary drama of the purest kind, it is as well to look at the facts.

Stephen Biko was arrested under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act in 1977 and held in isolation in the police station at Port Elizabeth. On 6 September he was moved to another building for interrogation and on 8 September he was transferred to a prison hospital. Four days later he died. Between 6 and 8 September he had suffered extensive brain damage. Despite overwhelming, if circumstantial, evidence against the security police, the inquest was unable to establish the guilt of any individual by 'act or omission'. This is not the same as a verdict of suicide, but suicide is the preposterous explanation put forward by all the witnesses, as they brush aside Finney's questioning.

He establishes two significant points. First, self-inflicted brain damage is clinically unknown. Second, Biko was constrained in leg irons and would have had to pull himself into incredible contortions in order to get near the wall against which he purportedly smashed his head. However, police and even doctors display a casual disregard for the evidence.

The Biko Inquest is a strange theatrical experience. Sitting among a wholly white audience, I was watching suited figures standing among wooden desks littered with papers and dotted with glass decanters, talking about a naked black man dying on a mat in a pool of urine. There is no attempt at the Afrikaaner accent and it is impossible to dismiss the disturbing intimation of a similar, if marginally less grotesque scenario in this country. Faced with such evidence, an English coroner's court would doubtless bring in a verdict of unlawful killing, but it's worth remembering that no such verdict exists in the courts of Northern Ireland. It is also worth remembering the death in prison of Barry Prosser, or even last week's *New Statesman* article on the use of the metal body belt.

To an audience glutted with contemporary horrors, the Italianate fantasies of **The White Devil** seemed more than usually unreal, though this was largely due to the efforts of director Philip Prowse to suffocate us all in grand guignol. Prowse is on leave from Glasgow Citizens' Theatre, where he is known and admired for his stylish, extravagant, often outrageous interpretations of the classics. In Webster he has met his match. The plays themselves conjure such an extreme, nightmarish world that the best way a director can convey their poetry and tragedy is to play down the excesses and go for depth and complexity of emotion. Prowse does the opposite, in a superficial production which exhausts us with its physical contortions.

Stark lighting on huge mobile walls turns the Roman court into an art gallery littered with skulls, books, candles and a pointedly anachronistic telephone. Rupert Everett's effete, serpentine Flamineo owes as much to 20th-century camp as to Machiavelli. He should be the centre of interest and he is never more than an oddity. Gerard Murphy's Brachiano will probably be remembered as the man who vomited at the audience and Julie Legrand's Vittoria owes more to her beautiful cream silk costumes than to the passion of her interpretation. It's a sad waste of fine actors.

But if hopes were dashed at Greenwich, grim expectations were happily swept aside at the Arts by Pam Gems's best play to date. I have always felt alienated by her style, which seems to me turgid, overwritten and obsessed with the need to make a significant point. In **Loving Women**, she at last lets her characters speak for themselves. A committed political writer, the political loss of focus of the Eighties has thrown her off-course with splendid results. Her characters may be confused about where they stand at the end, but they are wholly recognisable and splendidly real.

Admittedly the first half, set in 1973, is slow going, as Suzannah, the radical social worker, confronts her rival, Crystal, the hairdresser. Between them stands Frank, passive, ordinary, muddled – a difficult part, given fine gradations of feeling by David Beames. Ten years later they all emerge as mature and interesting individuals, as Suzannah agonises over whether to become a single parent and Crystal confronts her own inadequacies as a wife. The author's stagecraft gets into full swing in some superb comic, almost farcical encounters which carry the unmistakable savour of everyday life. Philip Davie directs. □

FILMS
John Coleman

Click, click

Under Fire (15)
Leicester Square Theatre
Lianna (18)
Screen on the Hill; Screen, Baker Street; Cinecenta; Classic, Chelsea
Star Struck (PG)
Gate, Bloomsbury

'I don't take sides. I take pictures.' As brave, accoladed war photographer Price, modelled along the lines of some ace of the profession like Donald McCullin, burly Nick Nolte delivers the slick and dubious pro's platitude early on. Most of us have wondered at one time or another – looking at a newsreel of a burning Buddhist monk or the grainy snap of a decapitation – why the hell the person behind the camera hadn't intervened, blowing out the match or firing from the hip instead of clicking for a scoop. After all, the Capas and McCullins of this world are demonstrably not, like most of us,

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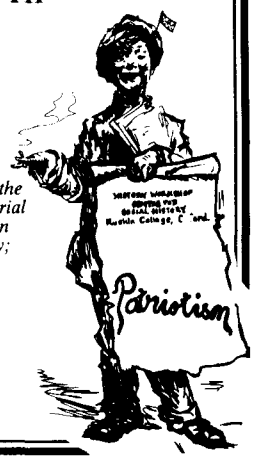

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cowards.

The first and shining virtue, then, of Roger Spottiswoode's remarkable **Under Fire** is that it should so persuasively show the hard-bitten Price, aided and abetted by the radio journalist he loves, Claire (strong-faced beauty Joanna Cassidy), forgetting his amoral cool – in the turmoil of Nicaragua in 1979 – to the point where he fakes a photo on behalf of the Sandinista rebels. This is the first nail in the coffin of President Somoza; or so it is implied. Price is also to drive in a last, when he snaps the death of erstwhile *Time* correspondent and pal Alex (Gene Hackman) at the wrong end of a rifle triggered by one of Somoza's soldiers.

Life plays naughty tricks and this apparent outrage in a good script by Ron Shelton and Clayton Frohman is, in fact, based on the genuine shooting of a US reporter caught by TV cameras. After the art-house angst of Bruno Ganz in *Circle of Deceit*, made in Beirut while real bullets were flying, and the uneasy Indonesian mix of capers out of Bond and metaphysical musings out of mind in *The Year of Living Dangerously*, it is hugely agreeable to find a fictional movie about recent history that neither coarsens nor trivialises that history in favour of 'colour' or high-flown European introspection. The qualms and acts of Price, Claire and Alex are thoroughly and intelligently part of the whole Nicaraguan parcel. Little wonder, of course, that the film's conscience-stricken liberalism should have fluttered American hawks' nests – because it further contrives to be a first-rate adventure story in a cunningly recognisable mode, complete with an amorous triangle (Price has taken over Alex's Claire), stirring chases, dry references to *Casablanca*-style romanticism (Alex at a night-club piano), and some marvellous secondary characters.

Jean-Louis Trintignant's double-dealing Jazy, a loquacious self-confessed spy and womaniser, having it off on the side with Somoza's Miss Panama mistress, relishes some of the sharper lines and turns out to be a more substantial manipulator than Price had suspected, the vain and supremely cynical core of the occasion. And Nolte's brow-furrowed Price is more than husky action-man. This may not be the political picture some people are waiting for (it is no *Battle of Algiers*, nor does it pretend to be), but it is as adult and audacious a venture – aimed at large audiences – as we are likely to get, excellently played throughout against well-deployed Mexican locations. It consistently entertains – Somoza's exit with that Miss Panama and the coffins of his father and brother is just one fragment of swift, sick humour – and its levels of irony provide food for thought.

Written, edited and directed by John Sayles, whose first film outing was *Return of the Secaucus Seven*, **Lianna** is something of a low-budget triumph, with its own kind of daring. The 33-year-old campus wife of the title (beguiling Linda Griffiths), restless in her marriage with a disgruntled, philandering lecturer in film and literature at a small East Coast college, falls – out of the blue and maybe out of the blues – for Ruth (played with feline sophistication by Jane Halleren), a child-psychology prof whose evening classes she has been following. They start a clandestine affair while husband Dick (Jon DeVries) is off at a film festival; Dick acts up a vicious storm, learning of it on his return, and uses it to force Lianna out of the house, away from their two young kids; Lianna, in a rented flat, then learns there is another woman in Ruth's life too. How she comes to terms with her new, exciting and terrifying vulnerability, with – effectively – having to re-interpret the facts of her life, is at the heart of this acutely observed piece.

Sayles is very strong on the assorted reactions of the campus community (which are by no means predictable); he also has a savage way with one-liners, a pained handful of which he hands to Lianna's acting-worldly 13-year-old son: 'So my old lady's a dyke. Big deal.' Most appealingly, he takes at least a couple of fancy-sounding risks and brings them off, piercingly. The fierce eroticism of the women's first love-making is overlaid with barely distinguishable whispers in French; their separation is intercut with a dance-mime sequence between a man and a woman on a campus stage. In less skilled hands (directorial, editorial), with less melting, edgy and sensitive performances, these touches could have spelt disaster; not here.

Briefly: Gillian Armstrong's **Star Struck** is a hearty hiccough in that brilliant career, a 'Let's-do-the-show here' musical of sorts set in Sydney, Australia, and invading that celebrated opera house for its pop, preposterous finale. Raucous, punkish Jo Kennedy is the young daughter of a pub-owning mama: she dreams of instant fame as a singer. Ross O'Donovan is the tiresomely puckish, even younger cousin who makes her dream come true. A water-ballet performed by a dozen homosexuals and Ms Kennedy may well become a collector's item. □

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2808 **Set by A. Boteman**

Wanted – words heard on stepping over the threshold which make you wish you hadn't come. 'You're in luck; Cecil's worked out how to do that Algerian thing with squid and lentils', for example. By 24 February.

No 2805 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Extracts from the next volume of *1066 and All That* for the period 1984-2084.

Report **By Di Dact**

Now that you've shown you *can* do good work when you really put your minds to it, we shall expect this standard to be maintained for the rest of the term. Imitation of style was pretty fair throughout, while the best essays were distingished by imaginative projection of future events. Quite good: Brownlie, Stanley, Sharpless, Warburton, Norman, Rogers, Short, Yorke, Bagshaw and Hall. Ten-pound prizes to those who came top.

The first President of the Alliance was Pitt the Middling, who had broken some mould in his youth, and was therefore still green when he gained power. He started several schemes, including The Doctor's Orders, by which all pavements were declared to be in the middle of the road. This meant there were Street Parties in Parliament, including the PSD, the DSP, the PDS, and the DPS. They marched together under the same Banner Headlines, and Banned the Press, except *The Gradient*. This was known to have Leanings, but nobody could understand in which direction, so it was sold openly. Eventually Pitt, who had a red Beard, and was therefore Memorable (although not necessarily Good), banned Bans. A *Gradient* typing error announced this as banning Banns, however, so Marriage was *completely* Dissolute.

WILL BELLENGER

Top Nations were replaced by Super Powers. As well as Super Powers there were Not-so-Super Powers and Third World Powers (who had no power). The Super Powers had a super idea which said: Power is super and that is right. We have power and that's all right. We are Super Powers and that gives us the right. The two Super Powers decided to decide which was most Super, by collecting Unclear Weapons and debating them to Cloud the Issue. If deployed these Unclear Weapons might lead to Genetic Mute Asians (who being Third World had no voice). But the first English pope, Pope Bruce of Kent had a new Gospel which said No Nukes is good Nukes. This peeved Presidents Legdropov and MacEnroe.

GERARD BENSON

In the Olden Days a memorable prophet called George Oilwell prophesied 1984, the third date in English History, so everyone expected it. He said that Big Brother would be watching us, but Big Sister prevented it. She caused the Falkland Islands so she became Lady Falklander. She had two Policies, one called 'Help Yourself', which her friends enjoyed, and the other called 'Mummyterism', because she looked after people. She looked after the Common People by making things so cheap that they would have been able to afford them if they hadn't all stopped working. Nearly half the Nation thought this a Good Thing. Her son benefited from both Policies. This caused Rate-Capping which was like Knee-Capping only higher. Her ministers were mostly unfrocked and became Revolting Tories.

PETER ALEXANDER

After the election of 1988, the new Prime Minister, Dr Ken Livingstone, proclaimed 'Victoria falls'. There followed the Newt-Ron war between England and America. This lasted till the year 2000 when, in accordance with prophecy, Steel and Owen came to power with the assistance of Jenkins, Rogers and Williams: two low numbers followed by three zeroes. In the same year Jesse Jackson won an Oscar for his 'Thriller' campaign and therefore became President of the United States. After the death and apotheosis of the Ayatollah Muggeridge in 2020 the Mugger Party made many converts with its 'tranny-bashing' campaign of spiritual purification. The end of the world, due in 2050, was delayed awaiting the end of a speech – known as the 'Cuban Rubric' – by Dr Fidel Castro.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Arctic Knights are not to be confused with Arctic Rolls which is different and involves traffic accidents in bad weather. Arctic Knights were so called because they were perishing cold and they cruised around the place saying things like 'yes, yes, twenty' in order to stop governments from falling-out as there was always lots of fall-out about when the Arctic Knights rode about.

JIM YORKE

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FIRST PERSON

Bill Greenwell

Dental drill

IN THE DAYS when simpering young boys sat shyly upstairs in their bedrooms, peeking nervously through the windowpane and mewling quietly the immortal words about not forgetting the fruitgums, mum, I was not personally tucking into a tin of forbidden bonbons. I had an appropriate number of teeth and none of them were sweet.

But there again, I wasn't too busy polishing my ring of confidence, either, nor wondering where the yellow went. I formulated all too early in life that universal fantasy about The Caveman Who Did Not Have A Toothbrush. I'm sure you've all entertained this one. You'll recognise its syllogistic ring. (1) Cavemen did not stick bristling sticks of plastic in their gobs, nor drop in for dental checkups; (2) I am descended from cavemen and my troglodyte blood runs still; (3) I am not going to bother brushing my teeth: if they managed without, so can I.

A number of muscles, principally in the shoulder region, remained relatively underdeveloped by my cavalier attitude to cuspid care. I just kept the halitosis in check with Spearmint. And, in this shameful course, I was aided and abetted by my dentist; much to my smug and neanderthal pleasure, he repeatedly pronounced my teeth to be in tiptop order. He was, of course, the authority.

But the authority of a dentist is apt to take on a different meaning when things begin to go wrong in the chewing biz. Before I had entirely fathomed that our mammoth-crunching ancestors were generally gumless or dead by a tender age, the day came when my dentist, who wore stout English brogues but spoke in the Irish variety, announced that surely 'twas a small filling I'd be needing.

The blood rushed to my feet and back, looking for a safe place to curdle. A filling, what did he mean, a filling? But there is no way you start an argument about the oral hygiene of prehistoric man when you have your mouth wedged apart. My master stood before me, sporting the white coat of total power. As the bodyless dog to Pavlov, so was I to the dentist. He could, although this is an unseemly prospect, have had me eating out of his hand.

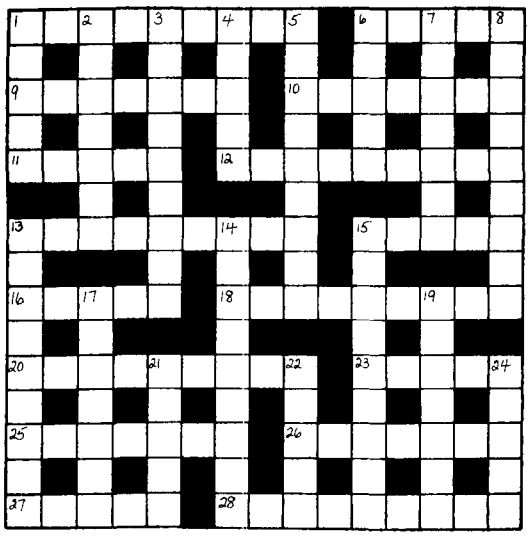
So stunned was I by his mastery that I began, as one does when in the service of a tyrant, to take everything literally. He probed and prodded with ease, as, numb with obedience, I allowed him to take charge. And this sequence of obsequious responses only went awry when, as he finished his minuscule repair, he asked me to rinse my mouth out with that pale pink liquid they have within easy reach. 'Swill some of that round,' he advised. I swilled. 'Now spit it out.' I spat, but, blindly following orders, spat straight at him. *'No, in the bowl!'* he cried, as I gargled desperate apologies.

No, in the bowl! I shall not easily forget those words. A hot flush is coming on me as I type. How easily we go, dumb and with our three bags full to bursting, into the world of white coats. But I have heard worse. A radiographer friend once described the mute and accepting attitude of an outpatient who had arrived for an acceptable dose of radioactive particles – eyes already rigid with the thrall of officialdom, practically marching, palms precisely flat by his side. My friend was courtesy itself. She held out to him some neatly folded linen. She said, 'Please go into the cubicle over there, take off your clothes, and *just slip this over your head*'. Notice the word 'just': that reassuring touch, that softening, somehow, of what was an order not to be resisted, not in any way to be challenged. The man entered the cubicle. There was some shuffling inside, the sound of cloth being folded, the faint suggestion of struggle. And then, silence.

Anxious, the radiographer moved closer to the door of the cubicle. She tapped lightly. She said: 'Are you ready?' There was a muffled reply from within, indicating an affirmative. The door opened and he stepped out into the bathroom, ready to have his insides X-rayed. She had given him a pillowcase. □.

Weekend Crossword 1429

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1429, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 21 February.



Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

ACROSS

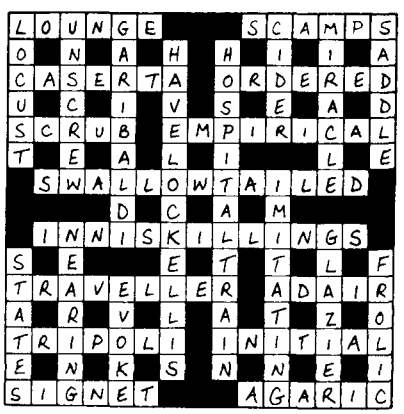
1. Town which provides material for shipbuilding? (9)
6. Plan to put honour before skill (5)
9. Pouch or river going into a bridge (7)
10. Surrounded by idiots he makes garments (7)
11. Leaves out the captains (5)
12. Conductor provided when special people took a journey (9)
13. They have unusual appetites for channels of communication without a writer (9)
15. Something observed sounds as if it is observed (5)
16. No words of approval for corners (5)
18. They provide the accompaniment when lots of players hold a cricket practice (9)
20. Choice about time for medical treatment (9)
23. Part of flower in whose paleness is beauty (5)
25. The child could give Ann a fit (7)
26. Cures do go wrong although it is thoroughly cleaned (7)
27. Disappear on the spot although awaited (5)
28. Odd odes named for a tragic heroine (9)

DOWN

1. Joins, showing there is point in ceremony (5)
2. Egghead put the nation in turmoil as a schoolboy (7)
3. Performers set on parts of audience like dogs (9)
4. Light-weight animal? (5)
5. Tributes made about a game for ladies (9)
6. Piece of cloth for cuff (5)
7. Where an hotel is rebuilt (7)
8. Girl takes in what may be stale and vulgar (9)
13. Giving forgiveness for study being interrupted by a party (9)
14. As a man I come between the cunning and the unadorned (9)
15. Thus a footnote on sound as a medium for craftsmen (9)
17. Drove freely without the iron after a substantial meal (7)
19. Pots are broken in the grass (7)
21. Something from Christian nations paid to the pope (5)
22. Organs of opposition carrying their point (5)
24. Languish as object of rivals' affections (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1428



Prizewinners to 1428

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Job descriptions and application forms available from: **Phillip Gray, Senior Industrial Relations Officer, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 14 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4ED. (Telephone 01-242 1941).**

Closing date for completed applications: **10 March 1984.**

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Application forms, to be returned by Friday, 24 February 1984, can be obtained from:
The Senior Official (Admin.), National Union of Teachers, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD. Telephone 01-387 2442 ext. 16.

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Britain's Health Service Union

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DEPUTY EDITOR

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CROYDON TRADE UNION COUNCIL is establishing an Unemployment Workers Centre in the London Borough of Croydon. Initially funded for one year by the GLC to provide a Campaigning and advice centre for Croydon's 14,000 unemployed, we need two members of staff who will have overlapping areas of responsibilities. All will need to have a proven commitment to the Labour Movement. For job descriptions, details of salaries and application form, write to Peter Spalding, Secretary **CTUUC C/O RUSKIN HOUSE, 23 COOMBE ROAD, CROYDON, SURREY CR0 1BD** or telephone 01-684 4907. Closing date: 27 February 1984. This Centre is an equal opportunities employer.

OV SELECTION CATERS for the more mature person as well as graduates and 'A' level students with typing and office skills. Phone Odette Veazey, OV Selection (Emp. Agy.) Abford House, 15 Wilton Road, London, SW1V 1LT. 01-828 8345.

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LISTINGS

FRI 10 FEBRUARY

LONDON Gay Humanist Group Open Meeting. Spkr Maureen Duffy on E. M. Forster. 7.30pm The Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1. **GHG, 34 Spring La, Kenilworth, CV8 2HB. 0026 58450.**

LONDON Fundraising Party for Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom. Disco, bar to 1am, buffet. £5. 8.30pm Ludgate Cellars, Apothecary St, EC4. **Write for tickets: CPBF, 9 Poland St, W1.**

LONDON 'Solidarity with Namibia'. Spkrs Bishop of Stepney, SWAPO Women's Council. Music by African Dawn, food from Africa, bar. Tickets £1. 7-11pm Montefiore Centre, Deal St, E1. **Org: Tower Hamlets International Solidarity/Tower Hamlets Trades Council.**

SAT 11 FEBRUARY

BRISTOL 'Has the Co-op Movement a Future?' Spkrs: Alan Taylor, Ivy Wood, Norman Stevens. Adm. £1. 'White Hart', Brislington Hill. **Details: Nat. Fed. of Progressive Co-operators, 28 Cromer Villa Rd, SW18.**

LONDON 'What price Trident?' Trades union conference, 10am-5pm County Hall, SE1. Speakers include Joan Ruddock, Margaret Beckett MP, Alan Sapper. Chair: Rodney Bickerstaffe. Resgistration £1.

EDINBURGH Scottish Labour Students Rally & Dayschool 'Towards a Socialist Europe'. Spkrs Robin Cook, Janey Buchan. 10.30am George Sq, Edinburgh University.

LONDON 'Family Law and the Labour Party'. Spkr Jenny Levin of LAG. 2.30pm County Hall, SE1. Women only, no creche but babysitting costs. **Org: GLC Women's Committee.**

SHEFFIELD 'Now it's 1984' dayschool on George Orwell. Spkrs Ray Hearne, John Field, Brian Sefton. 10am-4pm Hurlfield Adult Education Centre. **Details: Sheffield 392635.**

MON 13 FEBRUARY

LONDON Anti-Racist Week begins at School of Oriental and African Studies, Malet St, WC1. **Details: SOAS Students Union 01-580 0916.**

TUES 14 FEBRUARY

LONDON Peace Education Group meeting 5.30pm. All welcome at Peace Pledge Union, 6 Endsleigh St, WC1. **Details: Jackie 01-387 5501.**

MANCHESTER 'Whistleblowers – what happens to scientists whose opinions don't fit their bosses' policies?' 7.30pm Polytechnic Students Union, Sidney St (off Oxford Rd). **Details: British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, 9 Poland St, London, W1.**

THURS 16 FEBRUARY

LONDON 'Conservatism v Socialism' public debate. Spkrs Harry Phibbs, Young Monday Club, Dick Donnelly SPGB. 8pm Prince Albert, Wharfdale Rd, Kings Cross, N1. Adm free. **Org: Socialist Party of Great Britain.**

FRI 17 FEBRUARY

LONDON 'Voice of Protest, Voice of Promise; exploring spirituality for a new age' Lecture, discn. Spkr Ursula King, University of Leeds. Chair: Libby Purves. 6.15pm Jeffery Hall, Inst. of Education, 20 Bedford Way, WC1. **Details: 01-387 3727.**

MANCHESTER Alternative jobs Fair, UMIST Union. Exhibitions, displays, spkrs. Adm. free. **Details: Pete Abel 061-236 9114 x 27.**

SAT 18 FEBRUARY

LONDON Benefit for E. London Troops Out Movement. Live Irish music, floor singers, bar, food. Adm. £1.50/£1 unwaged. 8pm Hackney Trades Club, 96 Dalston La, E8. **Org: TOM, Box 13 136 Kingsland High St, E8.**

FORTHCOMING

23 FEB LONDON 1984 and Human Rights. Spkr Prof Theo van Boven, to 1982 Director UN Div. of Human Rights. Adm. free. 6pm Chatham House, 10 St. James Sq, SW1. **Org: MRG 01-930 6659.**

23 FEB DUDLEY 'The Forward Face of Feminism' Public discn. with Tricia Davis of Communist Party. 7.30pm The Swan, Castle St.

25 FEB MANCHESTER Anti-Trident Convention in Free Trade Hall. 11 am-5 pm. Spkrs, workshops, videos, displays. **Details: Anti-Trident Campaign, 420 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow G2. 041-332 3141.**

25 FEB LONDON Meeting to Relaunch 'The Leveller' 2pm Room 2 ASTMS Head Office, 79 Camden Rd, NW1. **Details: 01-274 2288.**

25 FEB LONDON Chile Solidarity AGM 10.30am-4.30pm Camden Town Hall, Euston Rd, NW1. Creche/food. **Details: Helen Garner 01-272 4928.**

5 MAR LONDON 1984 Jose Marti International Work Brigade to Cuba introductory meeting 7.30pm County Hall, SE1. **Details: Britain-Cuba Resource Centre (Brigade) c/o 119 Burton Rd, SW9.**

7 MAR BIRMINGHAM Bruce Kent 7.30pm JCR, Polytechnic, Westbourne Rd, Edgbaston followed by CND benefit. **Org: WMCND.**

9 MARCH 1984 International Women's Day delegation to Armagh Prison, N. Ireland. (return Mon. 12 Mar). Picket prison 11 Mar. Approx. cost £45. Accommo. provided in Belfast. **Details: London Armagh Co-ord. grp. 374 Gray's Inn Rd, WC1. Maggie: 01-289 3878 (day)**

10 & 11 MARCH OXFORD 'PATRIOTISM' – 2-day National Workshop on Ideology and myth in the making of English National Identity. **Tickets £6/£3 unwaged and details: s.a.e. to History Workshop Centre for Social History, Ruskin College, Oxford.**

17 MAR LONDON Doctors for a Women's Choice on Abortion Open Meeting. 10am Small Hall, Camden Centre, Bidborough St, WC1.

17 MAR CARDIFF 'An Ageing Society: Challenge for Social Services'. 10am-5.30pm University College, Cardiff, Centenary Conference. Fee: £10 incl. lunch. **Details: Ms Pat Harris, Dept. of Social Admin, University College, PO Box 78, Cardiff CF1 1XL.**

17 MARCH SANDWELL Midlands Peoples Campaign for Jobs festival. **Details: Sandwell Unemployed People's Centre, 324 High St, W. Bromwich 021-525 5275.**

18 MARCH LONDON Dance & Music Benefit for Chile Comm. for Human Rights. 7.30pm Sadler's Wells Theatre. **01-837 7561.**

19 MARCH OXFORD 'The World After Nuclear War' one-day conf. Randolph Hotel. Norman Myers reporting on Washington Conference last Nov. £15 **Details & bkngs: Rm. 1209 Surrey House, Throwley Way, Sutton, Surrey SV11 4QQ.**

23-25 MARCH 'CND work in the regions' wkend conf. St. Francis Hall, University of Birmingham. **021-632 6009.**

24 MARCH LICHFIELD Day Conf. 'Psychological stress of nuclear age' Friary Grange. creche. **Contact Dr. Hazel Baker, Rockville, Cherry Orchard, Lichfield, Staffs.**

14-15 APRIL NOTTINGHAM 'Disarmament and Independent Foreign Policy for Britain' discn. conf. at Nottingham University. **Details: Anne Kestenbaum, Bernard Russell Peace Fdn. 0602 708318.**

16-18 APR BRIGHTON 3-day conf. 'Race, Gender and Class'. Booking and details: Mike Cole, A Block, Brighton Polytechnic, Falmer BN1 9PH. 0273 606622.

16-21 JULY NEWCASTLE Third International Seminar on tertiary educational and staff development at Newcastle Polytechnic. Co-operative format, action learning. **Details/Registration BY APRIL: Chris de Winter Hebron, Humanities Faculty, Lipman Bldg, Newcastle Polytechnic 0632 612181.**

Sorry, but we can't accept entries over the phone. Entries must be received by Friday preceding issue date. We reserve the right to exclude items without giving reasons and are not responsible for errors. Space is strictly limited so if you definitely want your item to appear, we suggest you book it as an ad. under the appropriate classified heading. See main heading for rates, etc.

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GROUPS/MEETINGS

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY. The Revd Prof. Owen Chadwick, OM, KBE will deliver the Drawbridge Lecture: 'The Fisherman and His God: Izaak Walton' at 5.30 p.m. Thursday 23 February 1984, in the New Lecture Theatre, King's College, Strand, London WC2. All welcome.

CHURCH AND POLITICS: links? Why? How? Enoch Powell MP, Profs Raymond Plant, Ronald Preston, Keith Ward and others at Modern Churchmen's Conference. Open to all. 23-27 July, Hoddesdon, Herts. Details: School House, Leysters, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 0HS.

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PLANETARY HIERARCHY'S ordered plan freely given to solve chaos. Course 'Alice Bailey', 24-26 February. Medhope, Tintern, Gwent. 029 18 253.

THEOSOPHY. S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Sunday 12 February 8 p.m. Informal Q/A Meeting 'Man, Mortal and Immortal'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

'1984 AND HUMAN RIGHTS' – The Minority Rights Group's Annual Lecture by Theo Van Boven (former UN Director of Human Rights) 6 p.m. on 23 February at 10 St James's Square, London SW1 – admission free without ticket.

German Historical Institute, London

Wednesday, 15 February, 5pm

Prof. Dr Saul Friedländer (Tel Aviv)

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PUBLICATIONS

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Ruth Lister

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